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**Teachers with a Capital 'T': Exploring  
the professionalism of experienced  
teachers in Kyrgyzstan**

by Nurbek Teleshaliyev



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**Abstract**

This thesis explores three aspects of teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan through the lives and practice of eight experienced and exemplary teachers in four schools in Chui province. Highly experienced and exemplary teachers have been called Teachers with a capital ‘T’ since Soviet times because they are well-regarded and an inspiration to other teachers; they are known to promote ethical principles and high standards in teaching. The thesis probes why this persists in contemporary Kyrgyzstan despite the effects of at least three decades of under investment in education and teacher policies that have deprofessionalised teachers and diminished their social status. My conceptual approach includes an exploration of three interrelated aspects of professionalism: professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions. It explores the connections and disjunctions between these ideas in the field and how they are shaped by context. This provides the framework for a qualitative research approach that involves elements of case study method which underpins an examination of the influences of context and the interconnections between the personal, professional and social factors that shape teachers’ choices and their teaching. My purpose was to understand how these dimensions are significant for the teaching profession and education reform. The thesis suggests that policy makers and other teachers in Kyrgyzstan can learn a lot from EEE Teachers as they have persevered under difficult working conditions and continue to be innovative and enthusiastic in their teaching. The thesis explains how the three dimensions of professionalism are fundamentally shaped by their internal dynamics and external context. It arrives at a final question that has crucial implications for the future of the teaching profession: how can Teachers with a capital ‘T’ use their potential to transform teaching and the context for the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan?

## Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge except as specified in the thesis. This thesis does not exceed 80,000 words in length.

Name: Nurbek Teleshaliyev

Signed:



Date: 11 December 2015

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## Abstract

This thesis explores three aspects of teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan through the lives and practice of eight experienced and exemplary teachers in four schools in Chui province. Highly experienced and exemplary teachers have been called Teachers with a capital 'T' since Soviet times because they are well-regarded and an inspiration to other teachers; they are known to promote ethical principles and high standards in teaching. The thesis probes why this persists in contemporary Kyrgyzstan despite the effects of at least three decades of under investment in education and teacher policies that have deprofessionalised teachers and diminished their social status. My conceptual approach includes an exploration of three interrelated aspects of professionalism: professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions. It explores the connections and disjunctions between these ideas in the field and how they are shaped by context. This provides the framework for a qualitative research approach that involves elements of case study method which underpins an examination of the influences of context and the interconnections between the personal, professional and social factors that shape teachers' choices and their teaching. My purpose was to understand how these dimensions are significant for the teaching profession and education reform. The thesis suggests that policy makers and other teachers in Kyrgyzstan can learn a lot from EEE Teachers as they have persevered under difficult working conditions and continue to be innovative and enthusiastic in their teaching. The thesis explains how the three dimensions of professionalism are fundamentally shaped by their internal dynamics and external context. It arrives at a final question that has crucial implications for the future of the teaching profession: how can Teachers with a capital 'T' use their potential to transform teaching and the context for the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan?

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Finally, to my eight Teachers and to your colleagues, you opened your classroom doors and your lives and allowed me to learn from you. I cannot thank you enough.

**List of abbreviations**

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>BERA</b>	British Educational Research Association
<b>EDSoK</b>	Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan 2012-2020
<b>EI</b>	Education International
<b>GoK</b>	Government of Kyrgyzstan
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HertsCam</b>	A partnership between the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and Hertfordshire local education authority
<b>ITL</b>	International Teacher Leadership project
<b>KAE</b>	Kyrgyz Academy of Education
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NSC</b>	National Statistics Committee
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>PLC</b>	Professional Learning Community
<b>RWCT</b>	Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TUESWK</b>	Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Kyrgyzstan
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>VITAE</b>	Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WWII</b>	World War 2

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## Introduction

My approach to the doctoral study accounted for in this thesis is informed by my professional background in the field of education over the last 20 years. In particular, a significant part of my work at the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan and my responsibilities at UNICEF in both Kyrgyzstan and Lesotho involved initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education in schools. My engagement with school teachers on improving the quality of teaching and learning made me more acquainted with the professional issues teachers face. In my encounters with teachers I started to learn about their concerns, values and identities. My early involvement with teachers led me to be particularly aware of how they respond to ‘top-down reforms’, which is a term I use consistently throughout this thesis to describe the managerialist approaches and policies that were imposed on the teachers I worked with. My subsequent experience confirmed that education reforms, even reforms to teacher policy, are typically implemented without adequate consultation with teachers and appear to have the effect of disempowering teachers and deprofessionalising teaching. These experiences shaped my initial ideas about the role that teachers could and should play in reforming education.

My interest in research was primed when I participated in a study in 2009 on teacher shortages in Kyrgyzstan. I joined a team led by Professor Steiner-Khamsi to research the teacher shortage in rural schools (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2009). The study sought to understand how schools dealt with the teacher shortages that were a consequence of poor teacher policies. I became interested in the reasons why certain teachers had remained in teaching, particularly those that had spent their lives teaching and were considered to be at the forefront of their profession. Their commitment to teaching was surprising to me given the persistent lack of support they had endured over many years. In a remote rural school, the principal remarked, in response to our questions about the teacher shortage, that ‘only *patriots* teach here!’ (UNICEF, 2011). I often return to this response in my



thoughts. When I started my doctoral study I wanted to understand more clearly what made certain teachers stay in teaching and remain committed professionals.

My study focuses on experienced teachers for whom I employ a frequently-used metaphor in Kyrgyzstan – *uchitelya s bolshoi bukvy* (Teachers with a capital 'T'). Typically, these are exemplary teachers who are well-regarded by their colleagues and respected by pupils and parents for demonstrating continuous commitment to the profession. These teachers are the subjects of my study. My earlier involvement with these teachers focused my attention on what seemed to be three interrelated questions: what motivates them and keeps them committed in their work; how do they enact their professionalism; and how do they affect and influence other teachers? If my research has a purpose, it is simply to understand the professionalism of these teachers, in that it might be possible to find ways to support and strengthen their work and in the hope that more teachers in Kyrgyzstan might come to learn from them and be regarded, as a consequence, as Teachers with a capital 'T'.

The eight teachers in my study have each taught for 20 or more years in Soviet and post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. They therefore represent a particular subset of Teachers with a capital 'T'. The number of years they have taught is especially important because it means that they are likely to have educated and worked as teachers in the USSR, when the social status of teachers was much higher than it is in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. These teachers reflect a valuable legacy in the context of the declining social status of teachers in Kyrgyzstan. They survived the major changes in the education system after the USSR collapsed in 1991 and it must have required considerable resilience to continue as a teacher in the face of the decline of social support for teachers and morale in the profession. Recent education reforms inspired by Western ideas have done little to change this situation.

In earlier research (Teleshaliyev, 2012), I found that the novice teachers I interviewed had learnt a lot about teaching from experienced colleagues, who, it appeared, were innovative and demonstrated commitment beyond their formal

responsibilities. This suggested to me that learning from experienced teachers is important for new teachers. Experienced teachers demonstrate professional commitment and experience that is essential to preserve and transfer. There is insufficient research on the role experienced teachers can play in transforming schools. My thesis builds on prior research on teachers in Kyrgyzstan by other researchers in Kyrgyzstan to explore this idea further: including Ivanov and Deichman (2008), Joldoshalieva (2007), Kabylov (2006), Shamatov (2005, 2013), and Valkova, Nizovskaya, Zadorojnaya and Buiskikh (2005). The idea that provided the inspiration for my thesis is to address the gap in knowledge about the role that experienced teachers can play in education reform.

The structure of my thesis is as follows. In Chapter 1, I describe the context of teacher reform and the working conditions of teachers in Kyrgyzstan. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I construct my conceptual approach through exploring the literature on three interrelated aspects of professionalism that interest me: 1) teacher commitment, and the related concepts of self-efficacy, moral purpose and resilience; 2) professional practice and how it is enacted by experienced and exemplary teachers; and 3) their engagement with other teachers and related concepts such as non-positional leadership, social capital and communities of practice. In Chapter 5 I describe my study methodology. I introduce the four schools and the eight teachers who are the main informants in my study in Chapter 6. I present my findings in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 7 presents the findings in relation to what makes experienced teachers committed and resilient throughout their teaching careers. Chapter 8 presents the findings in relation to what experienced teachers do in their practice that makes them exemplary for other teachers in Kyrgyzstan. Chapter 9 presents the findings in relation to how experienced teachers influence other teachers. In Chapter 10 I present my conclusions and the implications of my study for developing the teaching profession and for education reform in Kyrgyzstan.

## Chapter 1: The context of teacher reform in Kyrgyzstan

This chapter describes four contextual factors that influence teacher reform in Kyrgyzstan: the wider challenges facing the teaching profession in the country; the specific challenges arising from the working conditions of teachers; the overall education policy environment; and the positioning of teachers in the Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan (EDSoK) for 2012-2020 (GoK, 2012). This overall context is crucial for understanding the three aspects of teacher professionalism that experienced teachers demonstrate and that are particularly interesting for my study – continuous commitment to teaching, professional practice and professional interactions – and how these are first formed and how they play out in reality. I am also interested in exploring how these teachers, in turn, might be able to affect and shape the future context for education quality, the teaching profession and education reform in Kyrgyzstan.

In the late nineteenth century Kyrgyzstan became part of the Russian empire. It was constituted as a Soviet republic after the socialist revolution in 1917. The Kyrgyz Republic gained independence in 1991. Kyrgyzstan is situated between Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the south, and China to the south and east.

It is the second poorest country in the former Soviet Union and one of the poorest countries in the world. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) composition in Kyrgyzstan varies with the source of information. According to the Ministry of Economics, the composition of the GDP in Kyrgyzstan in 2014 was as follows: agriculture sector – 17.2 per cent, industrial sector – 34.7 per cent, and services – 48.1 per cent (2015). The services sector includes trade and repairs of motor vehicles, transport and communications, hotels and restaurants, financing and real estate, health care, and education and government services. In relation to GDP development trends, about 20 per cent of the GDP of Kyrgyzstan, which is considered to be an agricultural country, was accounted for by the agriculture sector in 2011. The role of the agriculture sector in the economy decreased from

40 per cent in 1990s (ADB, 2012). The services sector increased from around 20 per cent in 1990 to around 50 per cent in 2011. What remain largely unaccounted for in the GDP are remittances from the wages of about 800,000 people in neighbouring countries, working mainly in low qualified jobs, amounting to 1.5 billion US dollars, 25 per cent of GDP, in 2011 (ADB, 2012). Despite the remittances that come mostly from Russia, absolute poverty increased to 38 per cent of the population in 2012, up from 32 per cent in 2008 (World Bank, 2013). Because of current sanctions against Russia, remittances are likely to decrease; this will result in less work for migrants from Kyrgyzstan. The prolonged absence of labour migrants, who comprise about 29 per cent of the 2.5 million economically active population (ADB, 2012), affects the well-being of their children at home and makes teachers' work more challenging as they seek to educate these children.

Corruption corrodes the governance and delivery of public services, which affects the working conditions of teachers. Two presidents were ousted because of their corruption, nepotism and poor governance: Akayev in 2005 and Bakiev in 2010. According to a corruption perceptions index (Transparency International, 2014), Kyrgyzstan is listed as 136 on a list of 174 countries (where number 1 is least corrupt and number 174 is most corrupt). Kyrgyzstan has one of the highest fiscal deficits in the Europe/Central Asia region, 4-5 per cent, which makes the government dependent on external aid to finance the budget (WB, 2013).

The Kyrgyz language belongs to the Turkic group of languages. The population of Kyrgyzstan is 72 per cent Kyrgyz. The biggest minority groups are Uzbek and Russian (respectively, 14 per cent and 6 per cent) (NSC, 2013). Islam is the predominant religion in both urban and rural areas. Members of Russian Orthodox and other non-Muslim religious groups live mainly in major cities. Sunni Islam is practiced by 83 per cent of the population. Approximately 15 per cent of the population is Christian, half of which identifies itself as Russian Orthodox (USAID, 2012).

### Wider challenges facing the teaching profession

The teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan faces difficulties at all stages: from the selection and admission to pre-service training (Drummond & DeYoung, 2004; Silova, 2009; Shamatov, 2013); the quality of the training (Kabylov, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi, Mossayeb & Ridge, 2007; UNICEF, 2011); the recruitment and deployment of teachers; support for and retention of teachers (Steiner-Khamsi, Kumenova & Taliev, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, Moldokmatova & Sheripkanova-MacLeod, 2009); in-service training (Kabylov, 2006; Joldoshalieva, 2007); and improving and sustaining professionalism (Niyozov & Shamatov, 2006, 2010; DeYoung, 2011; Shamatov, 2013). The current economic and social hardships for teachers in Kyrgyzstan started with the collapse of the USSR. Teachers suffered a loss of social status (Silova, 2009), their wages only amounted to around 60 per cent of the average wage (OECD, 2010), and many resorted to supplementing their teaching income by other means such as farming and small trade (Niyozov & Shamatov, 2006, 2010; Silova, 2009). Also, schools lost the support they had previously received for building maintenance, textbook renewal and provision of learning materials. Teachers themselves had to supply the basic resources they needed for teaching. Thus, the essential conditions for their work became extremely challenging and many teachers were forced to leave the profession. Official teacher shortage statistics only measure vacancies for teaching posts, which was at 4.2 per cent in 2011 (NSC, 2011), but a closer study by Steiner-Khamsi *et al.* (2009) revealed the actual shortages to be far higher. Exactly how much higher is impossible to say because schools and teachers restructure their work in order to cope with the crisis in ways that mask the actual shortage (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2009).

The teaching force in Kyrgyzstan had 74,407 secondary school teachers in the 2013-2014 academic year (NSC, 2014). School teaching is predominantly a female profession as women represent 83 per cent of all teachers. About 85 per cent of secondary school teachers have a higher education diploma, and the rest have secondary professional, secondary pedagogical or secondary general education. Rural secondary school teachers comprise 74 per cent, and urban

secondary school teachers comprise 26 per cent (NSC, 2014). The age groups of teachers vary: about 7 per cent are retired teachers, and teachers of pre-retired age of 48-58 years old comprise 25 per cent. Teachers under 25 years old are around 21 per cent of all teachers, while teachers aged 26-47 years are 47 per cent (NSC, 2011). In terms of duration of teaching, 19 per cent of teachers have less than 5 years of teaching experience, 29 per cent are teachers who have worked from 5 to 15 years in school, and 52 per cent of teachers have worked in school for 15 or more years (NSC, 2014). Thus, experienced teachers with 15 years and more of experience still comprise the majority of the teaching force in Kyrgyzstan.

### Pre-service teacher education

The first challenge that teachers face is at the level of selection and admission to pre-service teacher education: students who do not attain the required high benchmark scores set in the entrance exams for the more sought-after faculties, (for example 218 for Information Technologies), opt instead to enter a pedagogical faculty, which may have been their last choice, because the entry score for the pedagogical faculties is 122. The fact that state-subsidised scholarships are available is, of course, another incentive (Silova, 2009; Shamatov, 2013; UNICEF, 2011). As a result, pre-service teacher education institutes accept students with the lowest scores (DeYoung, 2011; Drummond & DeYoung, 2004; Silova, 2009; Shamatov, 2013), and many students enter pedagogical faculties not because they are committed to the teaching profession but rather because it is the easiest way to obtain a higher education degree (Silova, 2009). As a result, only 63 per cent of students enrolled in pre-service teacher education institutes graduate with a teaching qualification degree and even fewer go on to teach in schools (UNICEF, 2011). This suggests a huge misdirection of the scarce resources allocated for training teachers.

The quality of post-Soviet, pre-service teacher education in Kyrgyzstan remains poor (UNICEF, 2011). In pedagogical universities the emphasis is on subjects rather than on teaching and a positive professional identity is not cultivated. As a result, no sense of vocation is developed by the time students graduate (Steiner-

Khamisi, Mossayeb & Ridge, 2007). Very often, graduates of pedagogical faculties are not willing to teach and they lack knowledge of how to teach and how to deal with school leaders' requirements. Pre-service teacher education is criticised for not having in-depth pedagogical content and enough teaching practicum, and it has not been reformed for a long time (Kabylov, 2006; UNICEF, 2011). There are also discrepancies between what is taught in pre-service teacher education and what is taught in in-service teacher development: pre-service teacher education cannot keep up with the innovative technologies that are introduced in in-service teacher development (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2007).

#### ***The recruitment and deployment of teachers***

The transition from pre-service teacher education to teaching in a school is also challenging. Only 17 per cent of graduates with a pedagogical specialisation go on to teach in a school (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2008). This diminishing trend continues during their first year of teaching in school as 20 per cent of new teachers drop out (GoK, 2012). Despite the 'overproduction' of prospective teachers in pre-service teacher education (UNICEF, 2011), teacher recruitment and teacher retention remain problematic, resulting, remarkably, in an actual shortage of teachers at school level, which is why policy should make more of selecting the right students and spending more effort and time training them well. In addition to teaching not being the first career choice for many student teachers, their perceptions of the teaching profession are not promising. Only 36 per cent of pedagogical major students consider teaching to be an attractive career, and only 19 per cent want to become teachers (Steiner-Khamisi, Kumenova & Taliev, 2008). In 2008, only one third of teacher graduates joined the teaching workforce; in 2003 this figure was 49 per cent (Brunner & Tillett, 2007 in Silova, 2009). This resulted in a continuing disproportion of young teachers with less than 5 years of experience and experienced teachers with more than 15 years of experience: 18 to 50 per cent in 2009, 20 to 53 per cent in 2011, and 20 to 51 per cent in 2013 (NSC, 2014). Thus, more experienced teachers who still make a significant contribution to the teaching force are in the majority

in Kyrgyzstan and remain a crucial resource for novice teachers to learn from and for teacher retention in general. This also makes my study timely.

#### ***Teacher shortages***

The protracted teacher shortage is another indication of the unpopularity of the teaching profession. The findings of the teacher shortage study (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2009) reveal a number of what might be considered 'key strategies' that are employed by schools to deal with teacher shortages: these include the recruitment of para-teachers (non-qualified and under-qualified teachers), the employment of qualified teachers beyond retirement age, the assumption of what would be regarded as non-permissible teaching loads, high teacher absenteeism and non-existent teachers on the payroll to be key among the strategies employed by schools to deal with actual teacher shortages (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2009). The teacher shortage study also demonstrates that teachers respond to top-down reforms by creating their own mechanisms for dealing with the problems that such reforms frequently fail to resolve. These mechanisms may not be effective for improving the quality of teaching at a systemic or national level but as localised, professional responses by teachers they are, nevertheless, very significant: they demonstrate that teachers tend to compensate in a constrained and unsupportive working environment by drawing on their own 'inner' professional resources.

#### ***Working conditions of teachers***

In this section I discuss three factors in the working environment of teachers: the remuneration of teachers, the availability of materials and equipment, and existing decentralised education governance and the effects of decentralisation.

Despite the long-awaited wage reform in 2011, teachers' wages remain uncompetitive and below the national wage average, which is only three-quarters or 74.6 per cent of what other state employees in Kyrgyzstan earn on average (UNICEF, 2014). As a result, graduates either do not join the teaching force, or drop out after 2 or 3 years (UNICEF, 2011). The government claims that there

are almost no teacher vacancies after the recent wage increment, but there is no evidence to support this statement. As a result of insufficient earnings teachers continue to take on non-permissible teaching loads, which are regulated by the Labour Law (UNICEF, 2014) on an hourly basis. At school level, so-called 'strategic vacancies' are kept by school leaders to distribute teaching hours among experienced teachers. These vacancies allow teachers to earn more money. As a result, teachers are allowed to teach more hours, which is 31 hours, than before the new wage scheme, with a maximum workload of 49 hours, and are allowed to work even beyond the maximum permissible hours prescribed by the Labour Law (UNICEF, 2014). Such a workload has a negative impact on the quality of teaching. Also, it is within the jurisdiction of the school director to assign or revoke additional hours to teachers, which may promote favouritism towards experienced teachers and prejudice against novice teachers (*ibid.*). Moving to the new wage scheme also means that school leaders have to make teachers accountable for every work hour and, as a result, teachers are too preoccupied with reporting on administrative work instead of concentrating on professional standards and work ethics (*ibid.*).

In addition to their poor remuneration, teachers explain that the poor *materialdyk-technikalyk baza* (material and equipment resources) also negatively influence the quality of teaching and learning (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2008). The proportion of schools with book shortages remains significant, ranging from 20 to 55 per cent depending on region (WB, 2013). Thirteen per cent of Kyrgyz instruction schools (which are 80 per cent of all schools) had less than half the books they needed at the start of the 2011-2012 academic year, and 32 per cent of schools with instruction in Russian have less than half the books they need (UNICEF, 2013). A significant lack of textbooks makes teaching difficult for teachers and learning harder for pupils. Inadequate textbook provision is likely to continue because of the budget deficit, as only 14 per cent of the total national education budget remains for articles such as textbook provision, after payments have been made for wages and school meals. Some social protection expenditures, such as the universal provision of free food in primary education and student stipends in vocational education, are not directly

linked to the education process and can be transferred to the social protection budget without impacting the quality of education (WB, 2013).

As a consequence of the administrative responsibilities they are asked to perform, teachers are less able to fulfil their professional teaching duties (Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2008). Parents and communities do not readily understand that teachers are merely executing the plans of the education authorities, plans that teachers themselves may not support.

In addition to teachers taking the maximum workloads, overcrowded schools also increase teachers' workload. In 2012, 22.5 per cent of all schools were teaching in one shift, 73.7 per cent of schools in two shifts, and 3.8 per cent in three shifts. Thus, three out of four schools in the country operate in two shifts. Teachers who work in two or three shifts end up having fewer hours for preparing their lessons, providing formative evaluation of students, or engaging with their peers or parents (UNICEF, 2014).

If the factors such as low wages and lack of materials and teaching equipment create serious challenges for teachers to teach with quality, the poor governance of schools may reveal what leads to such poor working conditions for teachers. The division of authorities which govern schools into central and local governments continues to demonstrate its imperfections within the system of social protection of teachers. The example of managing a school system, in particular the deployment of and incentives for teachers, reflects how inefficient decentralised governance contributes to the exacerbation of poor working for teachers.

The deployment of teachers before decentralisation was led by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), which explored demand for teachers in schools and assigned teachers to the schools (UNICEF, 2011). As a result of decentralisation, the MoES no longer deploys teachers and the role of local government in hiring and retaining teachers, and creating working conditions in schools, has become increasingly important. Under decentralisation the MoES manages only 15 per cent of the total education budget, with the bulk of the

budget going directly from the treasury to the *ayil okmotu* (local government authority) (WB, 2013). According to article 32 of the Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic (GoK, 2006), the *ayil okmotu* is responsible for attracting teachers and providing incentives for them. Teachers are promised free medical check-ups, support for securing land and property, and wages that match the national average (OECD, 2010). However, these promised incentives are hard to make good because of the low capacity and scarce resources available to the *ayil okmotus*. As a result, incentives such as transportation and utilities are provided in only 11 out of 55 *rayons* (districts); and land for permanent local settlement is provided in only 13 out of 55 *rayons* (GoK, 2012). In response to this situation, the MoES recognises the increasing power of local government over schools, and calls for more active participation by local government in educational processes, including help for schools and teachers (*ibid.*).

While local authorities currently enjoy substantial autonomy in deciding how to finance schools within their jurisdiction as they control about 70 per cent of spending on schools, they are not held accountable for results (WB, 2013). The central government does not recognise the weakness of the decentralisation process which has shifted the responsibility of funding schools from central government to the institutionally weaker local authorities and municipalities (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Silova, 2005). Also, according to a public expenditure review, about USD 22 million of funds allocated by the central government for rural schools are missing at central and municipal levels and are not accounted for at the school level (WB, 2013). The consequences of inadequate governance, problems with fiduciary management and leakages in the system significantly affect teachers and their working conditions.

To summarise, the government appears to think that it has many issues to solve before it gets around to preparing and supporting teachers effectively, which would involve attention to the lack of teaching and learning materials, low wages, meagre incentives and no social protection. Pre-service teacher education does not provide training of adequate quality. The majority of young teaching graduates are consequently unwilling to teach because the working conditions

are so poor and they lack practical knowledge and professional confidence. As a result, the quality of teaching steadily worsens because new teachers join schools unprepared and the whole system relies heavily on experienced teachers, those who have been in the job for 15 or more years, who are effectively forced to absorb the shock.

### The overall education policy environment

Government and international donors have addressed the issues of retention and shortages and have initiated strategies to attract new teachers. There have been several initiatives including the *Salary Incentive Scheme* (WB, 2004), the *Rural Teachers' Incentive Scheme* (ADB, 2005), the *Per Capita Financing System* funded by USAID, which included incentives for improved teacher performance, and a *voucher system* for in-service teacher development (Ivanov & Deichman, 2008). Unfortunately, these 'policy borrowings' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) either reflect external ideas that are dependent on external funding or are hard to scale up due to scarce resources. An incentive scheme, the *Deposit for Young Teachers* (WB, 2004; ADB, 2005) is designed for newly qualified teachers, mainly in rural schools, and provides teachers with a sizeable supplement to the base wage on the condition that they work for 3 years. After the 3-year period, teachers revert back to the basic wage. The coverage of this scheme is quite low (UNICEF, 2011): in the 2011-2012 academic year, only 9 per cent of teachers under the age of 29 were participating (NSC, 2011). Clearly, this scheme is insufficient on its own to retain young teachers (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2008).

At pre-service teacher education level, the government provides scholarships for students of pedagogical faculties and it has lowered the entry requirements. Around 36 per cent of all teacher-education students receive state-funded scholarships (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2008). In the 2008-2009 academic year, the government allocated 88 per cent of the total state-funded scholarships in the education sector to address teacher shortages (UNICEF, 2011), yet graduates would still rather choose another profession than work as a teacher (*ibid.*). This



example demonstrates the importance of making state scholarships for future teachers more competitive and appealing.

As mentioned earlier, the government, with the support of USAID, introduced a new wage reform in 2011 to address the issue of low wages for teachers. The new wage scheme, which is linked to teacher performance and aimed at attracting young teachers, was a major breakthrough for many teachers who had started to lose hope. Prior to the national strike of teachers in 2011, teachers earned an average of USD 75 per month, around half the average public servant wage of USD 144 per month. As a result of the strike, the average wage range more than doubled to between USD 150 and USD 185 per month in May 2011 (USAID, 2011). On national average, the 2011 wage scheme accounted for a 43.6 per cent wage increase in that year (UNICEF, 2014). Teachers' wages now consist of three parts: a base wage, pay adjustments for rural and mountainous regions and bonuses of 10 per cent for the best performing teachers, called the 'stimulus fund' to retain and stimulate effective teachers (USAID, 2011). However, the current wage is still low for teachers to make a living from teaching the regular workload (UNICEF, 2014). The new wage scheme got rid of the 'category system' - a promotion system based on gradation of teachers - but did not introduce an alternative for an abandoned teacher career scheme that was necessary for providing incentives for experienced teachers, especially in urban and semi-urban schools (UNICEF, 2014). The stimulus fund has criteria against which to evaluate teachers, but mostly on administrative tasks. In fact, student learning outcomes and well-being are absent from the list of recommended evaluation criteria (UNICEF, 2014).

To summarise: the government expects teachers to work effectively while the government's own response, as well as the response of international donors, to addressing the poor working conditions of teachers is itself fragmentary and inconsistent. Teachers' actions have brought about an increase in remuneration but significant improvements are needed in the provision of materials and equipment for schools and to the social status of teachers. A closer look at the

recently approved Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan (EDSoK) for 2012-2020 reveals how the role of teachers is envisaged.

### **The positioning of teachers in the Education Development Strategy 2020**

The Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan (EDSoK) for 2012-2020 (GoK, 2012), as the main current policy document that sets the direction in the education sector, prioritises the strengthening of the teaching profession. The government identifies precise benchmarks related to teachers such as attracting young teachers among university graduates, and decreasing the percentage of new teacher drop outs during their first years of practice in school (*ibid.*). In addition, teachers nationwide are to be introduced to a *voucher system* that allows the choice of in-service training, and new teacher standards and assessment based on a competency-based approach (*ibid.*). It is significant to note that the EDSoK refers to what must be done with teachers; it does not see them as a resource for education reform. Regarding teachers as objects rather than subjects is a reflection of the new managerialist approach in the national strategy, which describes its shift in emphasis as one 'From maximum control with minimal accountability to minimal regulation with *high accountability*' (GoK, 2012:21).

The way the strategy uses *accountability* is particularly problematic: first, it is envisaged as the main tool to encourage teachers to improve the quality of education; second, it also makes teachers accountable for many things; third, it does not make clear who sets up the accountability system or the extent of teachers' participation in this process.

What is quite clear in the national strategy is that teachers are required to implement the newly introduced compulsory testing of pupils in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades of secondary school (GoK, 2012). The compulsory testing initiative may be the government's response to Kyrgyzstan pupils' poor performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2006 and 2009 (OECD, 2006, 2009). A more careful look at the 2012-2014 action plan of the

EDSoK reveals a direct link between the compulsory testing of pupils and the performance appraisal of teachers. Hence, the new assessment of teachers is based primarily on their pupils' performance in compulsory tests. Similarly, motivation and stimulation schemes for teachers are based on how well their pupils perform in compulsory tests (GoK, 2012). Unfortunately, these initiatives are similar to neo-liberal managerial education reforms underway in the US and the UK (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012), which assume that all problems have managerial solutions (Sachs, 2001), but have failed to improve the quality of education through introducing compulsory tests, and resulted in teachers teaching to the test. More importantly, these approaches have led to teacher deprofessionalisation, which restricts professional autonomy, limits teachers' higher aspirations and negatively influences teacher morale (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Hargreaves and Shirley argue that reforms related to the teaching profession around the globe that rely on testing and accountability cannot benefit the teaching profession (2009). The measures of accountability at system level are not appropriate for evaluating teacher performance because the professional growth of teachers needs assessment methods that are both formative and diagnostic. To enable the professional growth of teachers, policies should allow teachers to have more control over the nature and regulations of their practice (Frost, 2013a).

Based on my reading of the EDSOK, it is quite clear that the national strategy in Kyrgyzstan envisages private sector managerial solutions for the public sector in the form of a 'standards-and-accountability' strategy (Verger, Altinyelken & de Koning, 2013). Verger and others also argue that the managerial approach in education reforms has the consequence of holding teachers solely responsible for many educational problems, including pupils' poor performance (*ibid.*).

In addition, Ginsburg argues that managerial reforms elsewhere also convert teachers into assets and objects of intervention instead of treating them as human beings (Ginsburg, 2012). A recent donors' appraisal of the country's education strategy noted that the EDSOK does not address the teaching profession as a whole, nor present any ideas on how teachers could be inspired and mobilised

as a professional force (UNICEF, 2013). Thus, the EDSOK introduces initiatives for teachers without empowering or mobilising teachers, or providing them with opportunities to exercise their leadership skills in order to strengthen the teaching profession. As a result, Kyrgyzstan's teachers are likely to be asked to implement reforms demanded by policy makers and authorities blindly. This approach limits the critical input of teachers that is needed to improve the quality of education.

Thus, the role of teachers in making a difference to their profession is largely unrecognised. A reading of the EDSOK makes very clear that, whilst the government recognises the role teachers must play in improving the quality of education, it makes no meaningful attempt to enlist their participation in reforming teaching and learning or improving the situation in schools.

### Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the context of teacher reform in Kyrgyzstan, which is essential in understanding the real lives of teachers in my research.

Pre-service teacher education remains poor and lacks a strong practical dimension. As a result, graduates of pedagogical faculties are unwilling to teach in school. New teachers who join schools come unprepared, with no strong sense of vocation, and frequently drop out. The disproportion between the numbers of novice and experienced teachers persists and is worrisome. Schools rely heavily on either experienced teachers or retired teachers, which often results in their exhaustion because of increasing teaching loads.

Poor working conditions and low social status do little to encourage teachers to perform at their best. A teacher's wage remains below the national average and the guaranteed-by-law social protection for teachers is not in action. A lack or absence of learning and teaching materials necessary for teachers to maintain quality teaching causes difficulties for teachers and pupils to teach and learn at their best.



The involvement of teachers envisaged in the EDSok is merely tokenistic: the strategy utilises terms such as 'accountability' and 'performance' (GoK, 2012) but it provides little encouragement for teachers to take the lead, and it fails to involve teachers who may already be implementing in part solutions for the problems the strategy sets out to address. The policy-dominance of bilateral donors such as the WB and the ADB, which is characterised by a top-down conception of reforms that is neither teacher-centred nor government-owned, has helped to foster this approach. Evidence shows that the lack of involvement of teachers has resulted in deepening deprofessionalisation internationally (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) and in Kyrgyzstan (Niyozov & Shamatov, 2006, 2010).

In this research I explored how experienced teachers have to compensate for structural inadequacies and policy failure and how they can play a more prominent role in education reform in Kyrgyzstan. My exploration builds on the experience of teachers and their role in improving their working conditions; it echoes the growing global interest in how to involve teachers more centrally to strengthen the teaching profession and determine its future (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012; Frost, 2012; Sachs, 2003).

While the context of Kyrgyzstan has its own very particular features, it shares key similarities with other national contexts particularly through the current dominant policy discourse, which appears to be more global. Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken (2012) point to the lack of participation of teachers and the dominance of top-down, managerial approaches to reform globally; these are clearly prevalent in the EDSok (GoK, 2012). This convergence suggests that the international literature on teacher professionalism and participation may have relevance for Kyrgyzstan.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I review the literature, including texts from the post-Soviet territory, related to three aspects of teacher professionalism that are important for constructing my conceptual approach: professional commitment, professional practice, and professional interactions. My exploration of these

interrelated aspects of teacher professionalism in the international and post-Soviet literature informs the conceptual approach to my study. I probe the extent to which these ideas are interrelated and what may have contributed to keeping certain teachers committed for so long under adverse conditions, how professional identity shapes teaching and how and to what extent teachers shape professional practice, as well as how teachers support and influence other teachers. These aspects of professionalism are what initially primed my interest in this direction of study.

## Chapter 2: Conceptualising professional commitment

The first part of my review of the literature on teacher professional commitment contributes to my conceptualisation of teacher professionalism. It derives both from psychological and philosophical ideas; focusing on where these intersect to consider teacher professionalism and offer insights into teacher commitment - a commitment to high quality teaching every day and an ongoing commitment to teaching as a profession. Four related ideas emerge that are important in my research: self-efficacy, resilience, moral purpose and *prizvanie* (a sense of vocation). What matters for my study is to find how these ideas explain why Teachers with a capital 'T' stay on in their careers, continue to innovate, and develop their own mechanisms for coping with adversity and poor working conditions.

### Self-efficacy and resilience

The concept of self-efficacy, the belief in one's own ability to succeed in completing a task, is central in the discussion about teacher commitment. Albert Bandura expanded the notion in behavioural theory that learning is essentially a behavioural process based on repetition; his notion of self-efficacy brought the insight that learning is largely a cognitive process that takes place in a social context (Bandura, 1997). This insight had profound implications for teaching:

Teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy to motivate and promote learning affects the types of learning environments they create and the level of academic progress their students achieve.

(Bandura, 1993:117)

A high degree of self-efficacy is strongly related to teachers' motivation, persistence, enthusiasm, and commitment (Bandura, 1997; Bangs & Frost, 2012). This in turn has a direct bearing on the quality of instruction and pupil achievements (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This makes it valuable for my study in investigating what matters for a teacher to be resilient. Self-efficacy is a psychological construct (Bandura, 1997), which can be used in education to

understand how teachers cope with adversity, solve problems and bring innovation to their classrooms (Bangs & Frost, 2012). Teachers also need a high degree of self-efficacy in order to maintain a sense of professional calling (Day & Gu, 2010). Furthermore, a high degree of self-efficacy makes teachers more able to address the needs of their pupils (Guskey, 1988).

Self-efficacy involves one's self-belief about whether one can accomplish an action (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who believe in their capacity to resolve problems stay effective in their thinking in challenging situations by visualising options for success; this provides positive guidance for functioning (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy is a proximate factor for individual motivation, affect and action (*ibid.*). For example, some Moldovan teachers in the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) project, which involves teachers from 15 countries, show their determinism and belief in extending their influence from their own classrooms to school-wide reform, despite their low salaries and social status (Frost *et al.*, 2011). A high self-efficacy belief makes a teacher resilient, which is an important subject for my current study. So what *does* shape a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs?

### Self-efficacy belief factors

The following factors influence self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1989, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). According to Bandura, these factors combine to contribute to high self-efficacy and the development of resilience. *Mastery experiences* serve as indicators of capability and are about how usual performance is perceived by a teacher: if performance is believed to be successful it increases self-efficacy beliefs in the success of future performance; conversely, if performance is perceived as failure, it lowers expectation for future performance (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). *Vicarious experiences* relate to the idea that learning cognitively by observing the experience of others may build a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. *Social persuasion*, or feedback on the performance of a teacher from colleagues, pupils, parents or a school principal, may also boost self-efficacy beliefs. It

usually demonstrates that a teacher has certain capabilities. The *emotional and physiological states* that a teacher experiences during teaching, such as job satisfaction after a well-conducted lesson, are also contributing factors to self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Tait, 2008).

Thus, teacher self-efficacy is the result of complex cognitive processing, self-evaluation and reflection on information received from others. What I find important for my study is that the factors that shape self-efficacy beliefs suggest that they are shaped by both an individual teacher's perceptions about their own performance and by feedback from other teachers. In the next part I look at one's ability to be resilient over time and the factors that shape the ability to be resilient.

### **Resilience**

Self-efficacy beliefs are strongly related to the notion of resilience. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy have a high level of resilience; however, there is an important difference: self-efficacy relates to an individual's belief that they will succeed in the actions they undertake, whereas resilience relates to an individual's ability to prevail in adversity (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tait, 2008). Resilience, thus, also has an individual nature. While the concept of resilience is still considered to be contentious (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000) it is helpful for an understanding of a sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach (Gu & Day, 2007).

Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker describe resilience as:

...a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.

(Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000:543)

What is important for my study in this psychological definition of resilience is the idea of positive adaptation in a challenging environment. One of the ways to understand how teachers adapt positively to challenging conditions is offered in what Gu and Day refer to as 'positive emotions'. Gu and Day (2007) argue that

positive emotions play a role in teacher resilience. Evidence in the 4-year study 'Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness' (VITAE) of teachers in the UK shows that, out of a total of 300 teachers, 218 were able to maintain positive identities during their professional life cycles over a 3-year period (Gu & Day, 2007). I refer to this research many times as it resonates with my own study. Their research utilises the responses of teachers to provide an understanding of the importance of positive emotions for teachers' ongoing commitment. Gu and Day (2007) use Fredrickson's 'broaden-and-build theory of *positive* emotions' (2004) and Hargreaves' concept of teaching as an 'emotional practice' (1998) to explain the role of positive emotions as a resource for long-term teacher survival.

Positive emotions promote discovery of novel and creative actions, ideas and social bonds, which in turn build that individual's personal resources; importantly, these resources function as reserves that can be drawn on later to improve the odds of successful coping and survival.

(Fredrickson, 2004:1367)

If Fredrickson's theory helps to understand the role of positive emotions in promoting creativity and finding resources to prevail long-term, Hargreaves emphasises the emotional nature of teaching.

Good teaching is charged with positive emotion ... they [good teachers] are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy.

(Hargreaves, 1998:835)

Understanding the role played by teachers' positive emotions may help in understanding how the teachers in my study developed positive responses in adverse conditions, and became resilient, committed and resourceful. There is also a social aspect of positive emotions: when teachers cultivate positive emotions in themselves and around them, they transform their lives to become better and healthier (Fredrickson, 2004). In addition, some international studies have found resilience to be an essential attribute for addressing everyday professional issues in teaching: meeting the needs of challenging pupils;

balancing externally imposed standards and the needs of pupils; responding to curriculum requirements; maintaining physical, psychological and emotional well-being; and collaborating with colleagues (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Day & Gu, 2010). However, resilience in teachers is much more than the capacity to prevail in adversity; it includes the capacity to manage everyday work well over time in constraining environments (Luthar & Brown, 2007 in Gu & Day, 2013). This is helpful for my study into how teachers continue to pursue quality in their work despite the constraining environment.

Resilience is not congenital, and so it can be developed and strengthened (Higgins, 1994 cited in Gu & Day, 2007). This significant attribute creates the distinction some authors make between ego-resiliency and resilience (Masten, 1994; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000): ego-resiliency is a personality characteristic which does not necessarily involve adversity, while resilience is a dynamic developmental process (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Luthar (1999) finds that resilience can be developed at any point in the life cycle. Data from several studies indicate that the degree of resilience is not necessarily related to years of experience, career stage, or age of a teacher; it may fluctuate at different stages of teachers' careers (Day & Gu, 2009; Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012). The VITAE study demonstrates the capacity of teachers to be resilient at various stages of career cycle: early (0-7 years), middle (8-15 years) and late (16-31+ years) careers (Gu & Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2009).

However, some studies offer somewhat contradictory evidence on the commitment of experienced teachers (Huberman, 1989) and veteran teachers (Day & Gu, 2009). Using a life cycle approach, Huberman finds that some Swiss teachers with 26 or more years of experience became disengaged, with either feelings of disappointment or 'serene' feelings (Huberman, 1989). This pattern of disengagement is accompanied by serenity, scepticism and effectiveness, pessimism about policies, and confidence about their practice (*ibid.*). It is worth noting some peculiarities of the context, as Huberman mentions: Swiss teachers are well paid and work in well-maintained schools, and teachers in the sample had little or no administrative responsibility (*ibid.*). Interestingly, from the

perspective of my study, Huberman also regards the professional qualities of experienced teachers as '*recalcitrant*' – increasing serenity with decreasing engagement (Huberman, 1989). The idea of recalcitrance is rather ambiguous, yet it provides interesting potential angles for my study. One such angle would be to look at how experienced teachers are resistant to innovation and create obstacles to progress. Another may provide an explanation for how teachers who regard themselves as professionally mature protect themselves from unnecessary external interventions that may distract from their work.

Almost 20 years later, the VITAE research suggests broader findings than Huberman's disengagement, by looking at veteran teachers' lives and work, who had served 24 years or more, in greater detail (Day & Gu, 2009). However, VITAE teachers in their final career stage with 31 years or more of experience showed a strong belief in their ability to improve the learning of their pupils (Day & Gu, 2009). Contrary to Huberman's study, where an important variable such as 'school as an organisation' was under-represented (1989), in-school support was found to be a key factor for the continuing commitment of VITAE teachers in the final stages of their career (Day & Gu, 2009). In particular, a need to share common values and experiences was of importance to VITAE teachers in order to exercise their resilient qualities and to be able to respond to adversity (Day & Gu, 2009). I discuss the in-school support factor later in this chapter.

Regarding resilience as both an individual characteristic and also as a capacity that develops through the interactions between people within organisational contexts (Day, Edwards, Griffiths & Gu, 2011) helps to understand how teacher resilience develops over years. Resilience is thus a dynamic social construct (Luthar *et al.*, 2000), that is moderated by the phases in professional life and teacher identity. It is mediated by the interaction of various contextual dimensions that Gu and Day identify as personal, situated and professional factors: *personal* – relating to the lives of teachers, e.g. their capacities to manage expected and unexpected personal events; *situated* – relating to daily work in the school context, featuring the commitment and support of their colleagues or the support of school leaders; and *professional* – relating to values, beliefs and the

interaction between these and wider policy agendas, e.g. the strength of the sense of vocation (Gu & Day, 2007, 2013; Day & Gu, 2010). These dimensions are not static and as they change, teachers have to manoeuvre between them.

To summarise: resilience is built on self-efficacy. It is important for my study as it addresses a teacher's ability to remain committed and persistently strive for quality teaching. It involves highly personal attributes, self-regulation and positive emotions in the face of adversity and stress. Resilience can be enhanced at any stage in a teacher's career. This is particularly pertinent for my study because I want to establish how resilience can be developed by teachers in Kyrgyzstan.

Resilience also has a social and multi-faceted construction: it can be nurtured and it can grow. It turns out to be an unstable attribute, and depends on the interactions between the internal assets of the individual, the phases in an individual's life and various contextual and environmental factors. In particular, in-school support was found to be a key factor in maintaining the commitment of teachers in the VITAE research (Day & Gu, 2009). My study interrogates how this happens in school and among teachers.

In the next section I consider the key role of in-school support (Day & Gu, 2009), a resilience factor that fosters positive emotions and resilience among teachers.

### *In-school support*

In-school support plays a key role in shaping self-efficacy and resilience in teachers. Self-efficacy factors such as *vicarious experiences* and *social persuasion* refer to influence by other teachers through social interactions with school colleagues (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). To foster resilience in teachers, commitment to collaboration between teachers and school leaders are important (Handscomb, 2011). These suggest that in-school support is an essential factor in developing and maintaining teachers' self-efficacy and resilience (Gu & Day, 2007). I address the importance of social interactions among teachers later in Chapter 4.

Teachers have to rely on each other to survive in a challenging environment. Social ties with colleagues help them find common ground and values (Day & Gu, 2010), inspire each other, and have a sense of community. Through collaboration with each other, teachers learn from each other and create professional knowledge. Among the things that teachers learn together is learning about resilience. Day and Gu (2010) refer to resilience developed through participation in a learning community as *relational resilience*.

However, school leaders play a key role in nurturing resilience in the whole school as an organisation. *Organisational resilience* depends on a systemic and structurally supportive environment for individual teachers' professional development, which in turn fosters individual resilience (Day & Gu, 2010). This suggests that a salient role is played by resilient teachers who nurture the work of other teachers. Without the systemic support engendered by school leaders, however, it would be difficult for resilient teachers to foster resilience in colleagues.

One of the key issues for fostering resilience among teachers is to enable teachers to learn from each other about ways to become more resilient. Learning about resilience is particularly pivotal for teachers who have just started teaching. A study on the perception of resilience among 200 graduating and early career teachers in Australia also shows that, during the first 3 years of teaching, teachers may either develop or reduce their sense of efficacy (Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012). Resilience is equally important for younger teachers to work effectively (Tait, 2008). Perhaps, through mentoring and coaching schemes with experienced teachers, younger teachers can learn about experienced teachers' strategies to become more resilient. Following a study on the capitalisation of elder workers' experience (Griffiths, 2007 in Day & Gu, 2009), the experience of elder teachers can be used as it brings unique expertise for other teachers to learn from:

[When leadership support is provided] veteran teachers are more likely to sustain their commitment and effectiveness in the profession, despite possible health problems and other negative influences in their work and

lives. Their experiences, their values for education and their sense of vocation serve as sources of wisdom and strength which enable them to bounce back from adverse circumstances and continue to fulfil their original call to teach.

(Day & Gu, 2009:452)

Thus, in-school support, particularly for younger teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers, is important for sustaining a commitment to teaching (Smethem & Hood, 2011). It is important, too, for all teachers, including elder teachers, to be part of community of teachers and feel a sense of belonging, where they are able to share their experiences about becoming more resilient.

In-school support involves school leadership, collegiality, and a learning school culture among teachers. It is a necessary factor in the nurturing of self-efficacy, resilience and, of course, improving the lives and learning of pupils (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Day, Kington & Gu, 2005; Gu & Day, 2007).

Day and Gu (2010:170) identify a 'strong sense of vocation' and Howard and Johnson (2004) identify moral purpose as factors that instil the determination that turns negative experiences into positive lessons that can make a difference to the lives of teachers and pupils. The final part of this chapter looks at how moral purpose and 'strong sense of vocation' affect resilience and commitment.

### **Moral purpose and *prizvanie***

Moral purpose and a sense of vocation are different terms that have much in common. A sense of vocation involves the clear goals and mission that guide teachers throughout their teaching careers, including in times when they need to be persistent and motivated (Gu & Day, 2007). Teachers who have a sense of vocation are driven by their moral purpose to affect the lives of their pupils (Hoyle & McCormick, 1976; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Day & Gu, 2010). Moral purpose plays a role in helping teachers not only to become teachers but also to be devoted teachers (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Day & Gu, 2010). Moral purpose is at the centre of teaching, providing meaning and keeping teachers

focused on the needs and well-being of children; it is also important for organisational change (Fullan, 1993).

One of the most striking examples of strong moral purpose was found in an Australian study, where certain teachers chose to work in difficult contexts as a criterion of choice (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Significantly, teachers made their choices to teach in underprivileged schools in order to make changes to the lives of their pupils. A similar trend was found among Finnish teachers, who were committed to providing the best education for their pupils (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). Through an inclusive approach, certain Finnish teachers in the study collectively focused their sense of vocation to provide an equitable and just education, unlike colleagues elsewhere who were preoccupied with tests and paperwork (*ibid.*). Huberman (1989) found a sense of vocation to be predictive: some committed Swiss teachers who searched for innovation in earlier stages in their careers were more likely to be effective later in their careers.

In order to better understand the origin and nature of moral purpose in the Kyrgyzstan context, I considered the Soviet pedagogical theory that influences current teaching practice in Kyrgyzstan. Soviet pedagogical theory did not employ the term moral purpose but a similar term has this connotation: this is the notion of *prizvanie* (a sense of vocation), which was particularly pertinent to teaching. Sukhomlinsky (1984), an educator who problematised Soviet humanistic pedagogy, saw teaching as involving an ongoing study of human nature, an externalisation of the complex inner world of human beings. According to Sukhomlinsky, a teacher should have boundless belief in human potential. Sukhomlinsky was influenced and inspired by Janusz Korczak, the Polish Jewish educator who ran an orphanage in a Warsaw ghetto. Korczak was offered sanctuary by the Nazis, but he chose instead to share the fate of his children who were condemned to death. Following Korczak, Sukhomlinsky believes that educating children requires a teacher to give them her heart (Sukhomlinsky, 1981).

One of the most valuable qualities of a teacher is his humanity, *a deep love for children*, a love in which the heartfelt caresses and wise strictness and exactingness of father and mother are combined.

(Sukhomlinsky, 1981:23-24)

*Prizvanie* has two main attributes: the first is a firm belief in the possibility of educating any child; and the second is finding 'a harmony between heart and mind' as a teacher (Sukhomlinsky, 1984). The latter suggests that a teacher senses everything about a pupil: how a pupil lives and thinks, what makes a pupil happy and worried (*ibid.*).

Later many progressive educators and teachers of both Soviet and post-Soviet eras also used the term *lubov k detyam* (love for children), either to characterise the main personal and professional attributes of a committed and devoted teacher or to create their own child-centred schools (Soloveichik, 2000; Gazman, 1995; Tubelsky, 1995, 2012; Amonashvili, 2013). The term 'love for children' describes the ethos of some teachers in the context of Soviet and post-Soviet pedagogy. *Prizvanie* is built around 'love for children'; it applies equally to the idea of *bilim beruu* (teaching) in Kyrgyz or *obrazovanie* in Russian, and *tarbiya* (upbringing) in Kyrgyz or *vospitanie* in Russian (Grechko, 1951). In the post-Soviet Central Asian context, Niyozov also notes that teachers in Tajikistan demonstrated moral responsibility and were committed to caring for their pupils even after the USSR collapsed (2001). Teachers try to look at pupils holistically and care for all aspects of their development: academic, social, moral, aesthetic and physical, very often more so than for their own children and families (*ibid.*). Similarly to Niyozov, DeYoung (2007) suggests that Kyrgyzstan teachers continue to show commitment and care for socially disadvantaged pupils despite a lack of support from authorities. Thus, although moral purpose is referred to differently in various theoretical traditions, it bears the same meaning for teachers – life-long commitment to the teaching profession and devotion to the education and care of their pupils. The notion of moral purpose is important for my study because it points to the origins of the long-term commitment demonstrated by Kyrgyzstan teachers.

In summary, my examination of the international literature on teacher commitment involves the following concepts: *self-efficacy*, *resilience*, *moral purpose* and *prizvanie*. In-school support, particularly as it is mediated through experienced teachers, emerges as a key factor affecting the self-efficacy and resilience of teachers at all stages of the profession.

In the next chapter, I continue to construct my conceptual approach by exploring how committed teachers build their professional practice.



### Chapter 3: Conceptualising professional practice

In this chapter, I explore the literature relating to professional practice to construct my conceptual approach, which helps to explain how teachers build their professional practice and how this makes them exemplary to other teachers. Gu and Day's (2007) notion of quality retention is helpful for understanding how Teachers with a capital 'T' become exemplary by focusing on their everyday practice. It is professional practice that determines the quality and nature of the teaching profession.

The scope of my examination necessarily includes the strategies and practice teachers develop in response to what have been described as overly-bureaucratic, often punitive, and largely unhelpful accountability mechanisms for teaching that are implemented at a policy level without adequate consultation or insight into extant conditions in the classroom (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Sahlberg, 2004). I refer to this process as 'top-down' reforms or policies that have as their consequence the deprofessionalisation of teaching. This chapter explores the intersection between the 'Western' literature on top-down reforms and the deprofessionalisation of teaching (Apple, 1978, 1986; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Robertson, 1996; Sachs, 2001; Sahlberg, 2004; Evans, 2011) and the literature that more specifically critiques the legacy of teacher professionalism in the former USSR, which has so significantly shaped the professional identity of several generations of teachers in Kyrgyzstan (Eklof & Seregny, 2005; Silova, 2009; DeYoung, 2011; Niyozov, 2011).

The literature relating to professional practice of teachers enables an exploration of a peculiar commonality across time and geography that links the particular experience of teachers in Kyrgyzstan with teachers internationally: the top-down policy and management approaches of the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet era and the no less top-down marketisation, competition and narrow outcomes emphases of neoliberal ideology that are shaping education policy globally and have more recently come to Kyrgyzstan. The literature sheds light on how

teachers are responding to top-down policy and managerial regimes globally, enabling a more comparative reading of the contemporary experience of teachers in Kyrgyzstan.

#### The deprofessionalisation of teachers

During the last 30 years in English-speaking countries, teacher-related issues have provided an active platform for policy interventions (Apple, 1978, 1986; Robertson, 1996; Sachs, 2001; Evans, 2011). Much of the contemporary discourse on teacher professionalism describes the management of teachers and teaching in language that conveys the sense that it is both imposed and external: for example, the 'ideological control' of teacher professionalism (Robertson, 1996), 'demanded' professionalism (Evans, 2008, 2011), and 'managerial professionalism', which is top-down in character (Sachs, 2001).

At the end of 1970s, English-speaking Western countries witnessed reforms through the 'accountability movement' that questioned the institutional and individual autonomy of teachers and introduced 'market and bureaucratisation' models of teacher accountability (Hoyle & Wallace, 2007; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). These reforms, which were influenced by demands for professionals to 'improve performance' under the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the US and the UK respectively, which started the trend of standardisation of education – involving prescriptive curricula, compulsory testing and school rankings – that tend to disempower and deprofessionalise teaching (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Under these reforms, teachers and schools become accountable to the state through a necessarily narrow range of outcomes that fail to recognise the full range of professional competencies. These reforms are presented as a movement to establish a *true professionalism*, a view contested by many educationists who would consider that establishing true professionalism would involve, at least, a wider range of competencies and a set of accountabilities also to pupils, parents and professional colleagues. Evans (2008), Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) and others argue that the *deprofessionalisation* of teaching is an outcome of 30 years of neo-liberal



marketisation policies in education. These reforms resulted in increasingly centralised control, the growing drive for targets and measurement, teaching to the test, increasingly scripted teaching and a growing demoralisation among teachers. Bureaucratisation, paperwork and meetings came to overload teachers and divert them from their main responsibility of teaching (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009): in other words, the belief among policy makers that all problems in education systems and reform should have managerial solutions. Sachs (2001) calls this the era of *managerialism*.

Similarly, in what Robertson (1996) describes as 'post-Fordist' Australia, teachers' work was reorganised without their involvement to shape their professionalism. Teachers became 'target[s] for control' because of their role in 'producing knowledge and labour power' (Robertson, 1996). The autonomy of teachers was dictated by outcomes prescribed by the system and the ability of teachers to define their professionalism was 'largely illusory'.

There is little scope in the promise of professionalism to wrest a degree of autonomy because the crucial margin for determination – that is *ideological control* – has been unceremoniously split from teachers' work and placed in the firm hands of administrators, politicians and transnational capital.

(Robertson, 1996:51)

Robertson considers that a better understanding of the detrimental effects on teachers' autonomy is gained through applying Derber's (1982) notion of 'ideological proletarianisation', where professionals are expected to have specialised skills but are increasingly stripped of choice and authority to move beyond their designated areas of work, and 'technical proletarianisation', which involves a loss of control over the work process itself. With respect to the teaching profession, this translates as a loss of control over the goals and objectives of teaching, as well as a loss of control over teaching content and pedagogy. Robertson (1996) believes that recognition of the commodification of teachers' work and role under globalisation is the starting point for a real discourse on the 'intellectual autonomy' of teaching as a profession.

In the era of globalisation, it is no surprise that the deprofessionalisation of teaching that is taking place in the West is echoed in Kyrgyzstan. Trends such as the deprofessionalisation of teachers in the West are thus important for understanding the wider context; they suggest that teachers in Kyrgyzstan should expect an ongoing process of relentless deprofessionalisation.

Teacher professionalism in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan has its roots in Soviet teacher professionalism. This is important not only because the teachers in my study were educated in the USSR but because this legacy persists. Soviet teachers were the main instrument for reproducing the ideology of the communist party; thus, from the Soviet authorities' point of view, teachers were primarily accountable to the state for both the upbringing and education of pupils (Eklof & Seregny, 2005; Silova, 2009; DeYoung, 2011; Niyozov, 2011). Teachers in Kyrgyzstan have inherited the legacy of Soviet teacher professionalism, particularly in relation to the notion of upbringing children, with the big difference is that there little support from the state (DeYoung, 2011; Teleshaliyev, 2013). Teachers in the USSR belonged to an intelligentsia; not the elite intelligentsia that was engaged in complex mental labour of guiding, critiquing and shaping the Soviet society's culture and politics, but a bureaucracy at large, responsible for providing *cadres* that reproduced authoritarian society (Gudkov & Dubin, 2009 cited in Rebrova & Chashchukhin, 2013). In the period from 1960 to the 1980s, a higher education degree became the requirement for teaching; mastering the political, ideological language and being loyal to the authorities became less significant. Teachers were still agents of the authorities but, at the same time, they were able to distance themselves from the authorities more as individual persons, even if this did not mean full disengagement (Rebrova & Chashchukhin, 2013). Many teachers obtained a *pedagogicheskoe uchilishe* degree (vocational education degree) and completed their higher education degree during their work in school. Rebrova and Chashchukhin (2013) argue that Soviet teachers had a *prosvetitel'skaya missiya* (the sense of moral mission) but that from the 1960s, teachers began to reinterpret the role of the *prosvetitel* (enlightener) more as a professional calling, still within the prevailing ideology but nevertheless as part of their professional identity (*ibid.*). Unlike the elite

intelligentsia, teachers had to communicate their ideological enlightening mission to representatives of various social groups, including parents. The teachers' mission thus went beyond the school; it was expanded to include the organisation of elections, public lectures and *agitatsioniye poyezdki* (agitational excursions/events) to mobilise people around Soviet ideology (*ibid.*).

The Soviet state had total control over both curriculum and schools and so teachers functioned in an absolute top-down education system. Teacher trade unions in the USSR were engaged in working conditions and financial issues such as vacation subsidies or financial help in times of hardship (Niyozov, 2011); they did not dare to challenge the *status quo*. The deprofessionalisation of Soviet teachers was a result of their subordination to the communist state, which limited their autonomy (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). However, Niyozov argues that the tradition of full loyalty and service to the state (and to the social and political elite) in Central Asia was not only a Soviet invention (Niyozov, 2011). Teachers were always afraid of heresy and accusations from *Jadids* (reformist Muslim intellectuals in Central Asia, in the early twentieth century) at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (Khalid, 1999; Khan, 2003 cited in Niyozov, 2011). However, the extent of the influence by *Jadids* on the teaching force and professional identity is debatable because, according to Sutherland, the Central Asian Republics had only a 3 per cent literacy rate and a complete lack of native teachers and textbooks in the national languages before they were incorporated into the Soviet Union (Sutherland, 1999). So, one may assume professional identity was shaped in the USSR period.

Hence, there are similarities between teacher professionalism in the West under ideological managerialism and teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan with its Soviet legacy. In the former Soviet Kyrgyzstan, however, professionalism went through a process of bureaucratisation and deprofessionalisation even before Western managerial policy influences were able to take hold (Timasheff, 1940; Abbott, 1983; Jones, 1991; all cited in Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). The post-Soviet period has been dominated by neo-liberal managerial policies that are pushed by international donors (Steiner-Khamisi, 2012). The combination of the

Soviet legacy of control with neo-liberal accountability policies has doubly constrained the professionalism of teachers in Kyrgyzstan (Teleshaliyev, 2013).

There were teachers in the USSR who proposed new methods that presented a challenge to the *status quo*, but they faced considerable difficulties (Chapman, Froumin & Aspin, 1995). When *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) were announced in 1985, the *uchitelya innovatory* (teachers who innovate) in Soviet Russia were able to emerge and develop a teaching practice that exercised freedom of opinion (Chapman, Froumin & Aspin, 1995; Sutherland, 1999; Silova & Eklof, 2013). Among these educators was Oleg Gazman who came up with a school-based approach to educational reform, in particular pupil self-management and 'cooperative learning'. As part of this cooperative learning, teachers defined and chose their own curricula, textbooks, methods of teaching and in-service training (Gazman, 1995). Alexander Tubelsky, in his Moscow school, encouraged teachers and pupils to create their own rules and regulations for school management (Tubelsky, 1995). From my personal experience as a Soviet pupil, I remember my history teacher, Anatoly Romashko, who dared to challenge the facts in the prescribed textbooks for subjects such as *History* and *Human Being and Society* during *perestroika* and *glasnost*, by selecting his own materials and encouraging us to argue with him and think critically. However, both Tubelsky (1995) and Gazman (1995) argue that challenging top-down planning for schools was problematic as many teachers were not able to fully escape their 'authoritarian teacher's consciousness'.

In Kyrgyzstan, alternative views on teaching were introduced in the 1990s. Innovative methods of teaching were introduced, among them the Soros Foundation of Kyrgyzstan's (part of the Open Society Foundations) *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking* programme (RWCT), which incorporated philosophy of student-centred teaching and learning, including social development theory by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1987), a Soviet psychologist and educator. At the end of the 1990s the Soros Foundation of Kyrgyzstan introduced the RWCT programme to many schools in Kyrgyzstan which mainly

challenged the standard Soviet way of teaching (American Institutes for Research, 2001). This programme changed traditional ways of teaching for many teachers. Teachers in Kyrgyzstan who practice critical thinking methods enjoy their jobs more than teachers who stick to lecturing and more traditional forms of transmission (*ibid.*). The introduction of innovative methods and approaches in teaching during and since *perestroika* caused a major shift in teaching for teachers in post-Soviet states, including Kyrgyzstan. Wider social changes also inspired teachers to try alternative ways of teaching. Authoritarian styles of teaching shifted towards teaching with a sense of mutual respect and dignity between teachers and pupils (Tubelsky, 1995).

Teachers in Western and post-Soviet contexts are able to shape their professionalism if they are provided with the opportunity to do so. In my study, I make use of the distinction Linda Evans draws between what she calls *enacted* professionalism and an opposite of *demande*d professionalism.

Professionalism has to be something that people – professionals – actually ‘do’, not simply something that the government or any other agency wants them to do, or mistakenly imagines they are doing.

(Evans, 2008:27)

Evans promotes a teacher professionalism that is owned by teachers, offering an antidote to the demoralising consequences of both the Soviet legacy of top-down control and neo-liberal managerialism.

### Enacted professionalism

Evans argues that the only professionalism that makes sense is that which is *enacted* by teachers; she argues that reforms that concentrate on changing the behaviour of teachers by limiting and controlling teaching will not gain the support of teachers or lead to the improvements in quality that reforms are intended to achieve, and insists teachers’ thoughts and attitudes to their profession should be explored instead (Evans, 2011). The failure of the state to understand how individual teachers develop themselves professionally is the

reason why teacher policy fails (*ibid.*). In the UK, for example, neither the new national curriculum introduced in 1989 nor the professional standards introduced in 2007 took into account the views or experience of teachers and, therefore, little support could be expected for the proposed reforms. Evans calls this *demande*d professionalism: a wish list of attributes and roles that are imposed from above but are not necessarily practiced by teachers. Demanded professionalism does not reflect the lived experience of teaching, and thus cannot contribute to a professionalism that represents teachers. Following Evans, I use the concept of *enacted* professionalism to distinguish the professionalism that Teachers with a capital ‘T’ in Kyrgyzstan are committed to from the demanded professionalism that is imposed from top down.

Despite the prevalence of managerialist policy approaches to reforming education, researchers identify what they call a ‘new professionalism’ (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009), a bottom-up approach, consistent with the idea of *enacted* professionalism, that utilises teacher experience and expertise, prioritises moral purpose and collaboration and encourages self-directed professional growth. I use ‘bottom-up’ consistently throughout the text to describe approaches that empower teachers and strengthen professionalism, often in response to ‘top-down’ policies and management. Among the principles of the ‘new professionalism’, Goodson and Hargreaves (1996:20) identify ‘what teacher professionalism should mean in a complex, postmodern age’ as the following:

- greater use of *discretionary judgement* in relation to teaching, curriculum and care;
- engagement with *moral and social purposes* as well as the value of what is taught;
- commitment to developing *collaborative cultures* of help and support with other colleagues;
- occupational *heteronomy* that engages stakeholders beyond the school rather than self-protective *autonomy*;
- a commitment to active *care* that embraces the emotional as well as the cognitive dimensions of teaching;
- *continuous learning* rooted in ‘own’ expertise and standards of practice, rather than compliance with top-down reforms;

- the creation and recognition of high task *complexity*, with appropriate levels of status and reward.

Figure 3.1: Seven principles of new professionalism (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996:20-21)

I applied these seven principles in my previous research to explore the professionalism of ordinary teachers in Kyrgyzstan (Teleshaliyev, 2013). In my view, the principles of the new professionalism identified by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) aspire to the *enacted professionalism* described by Evans (2008); embodying the commitment to actively realise quality pedagogy on a daily, even lesson-to-lesson, basis. MacBeath (2012:15), in his report on *The Future of the Teaching Profession*, written for Education International (EI), identifies a set of 12 'criteria of professionalism' that reflect these principles but provide a more formal and procedural set of pre-requisites for the teaching profession including, 'a code of professional conduct', 'public service and altruism' and 'self-regulation of teaching by professional bodies'. MacBeath's criteria of the teaching profession include the right of 'professional association', which acknowledges the need for building institutional power that would enable teachers to initiate their own code of conduct and establish their own standards, effectively 'self-regulating' teaching. The idea of an *activist professionalism* (Sachs, 2003; Hoyle & Wallace, 2009; Bangs & Frost, 2012) thus emerges in relation to the new professionalism, partly because it brings teachers together to improve their teaching through collegial work, and partly because it helps teachers to position themselves as professionals and stand up to narrow managerialist approaches (Sachs, 2003). This provides a fundamental purpose for strong professional teacher associations (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Bangs & Frost, 2012). Strong professional associations are more able to achieve the political accommodation that is a necessary starting point for teacher activism to reshape the teaching profession (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012). This insight is relevant to Kyrgyzstan where a lack of collective self-advocacy disempowers teachers and renders impossible an equal political dialogue with authorities (Shamatov, 2005; Harris-Van Keuren, 2011). The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Kyrgyzstan (TUESWK) (EI, 2015) remains much the same

as it was in Kyrgyz SSR: teachers join the trade union primarily to secure benefits and privileges (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008).

A counterpart to Western teacher professional models has not emerged in post-Soviet Central Asia. Niyozov (2011) raises questions about the relevance and appropriateness of Western approaches to post-Socialist contexts; he argues that the notion of teacher professionalism is highly underdeveloped in Central Asia and requires strategic attention (*ibid.*). He puts forward five criteria that are relevant for the teaching profession in the Central Asian context:

- (1) an objective knowledge base,
- (2) rights and responsibilities to exercise discretionary judgement over teaching,
- (3) a university degree,
- (4) membership of professional organisations, and
- (5) social status.

(Niyozov, 2011:289-290)

Importantly, Niyozov (2011) calls for the problematisation of these criteria, and any other criteria originated elsewhere, as they are not perfect and need to be forged within the realities of teaching. Like Hoyle (Hoyle & McCormick, 1976), Niyozov argues that teacher professionalism cannot follow the same path as the professionalism of doctors and lawyers (*ibid.*). I draw two insights from Niyozov's argument that are relevant for my study: (1) the need to adopt a critical approach to Western ideas of professionalism in the Kyrgyzstan context; and (2) the need for an exploration of teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan that does not resort to a single set of principles for professionalism derived elsewhere.

In summary, the principles of the 'new professionalism' identified by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) underpin the notion of enacted professionalism. They are not necessarily exhaustive or fully pertinent for Kyrgyzstan, nor do they provide more appropriate set of criteria of professionalism than of those by Niyozov (2011) or MacBeath (2012). The notion of enacted professionalism and the seven principles of the new professionalism force a focus on what teachers do every day and on what they think about what they do, not on what they are asked to do

by authorities, and are thus useful for my research. In the next section of this chapter, I derive a more relevant approach to exploring teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan that allows for flexibility and a problematisation of preconceived notions about teacher professionalism.

### The professionalism continuum

The idea of a professionalism continuum, first proposed by Hoyle in 1974 but subsequently redeveloped in 2008 (Hoyle, 1974) provides a meaningful direction for my thinking about a spectrum of teacher-initiated, ongoing professional activities and growth. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, on one side of this continuum there is the *extended* professional and on the other side there is the *restricted* professional. By validating but differentiating between two types of teachers – *extended* and *restricted* professionals – Hoyle set the early parameters for thinking about teacher professionalism. In Hoyle's characterisation, the restricted professional is preoccupied with the teaching subject and has little interest in engaging the broad school community. The extended professional links practice with a theory of teaching and learning, is socially aware of pupils' backgrounds and surrounding community, and works on joint projects with other teachers and colleagues (Hoyle & McCormick, 1976). Many misinterpret Hoyle and insist on dividing professionals into two distinct 'types' of teachers rather than seeing these attributes along a continuum. Extended professionalism became the preferred policy goal in the UK as the idea of restricted professionalism had unfortunate negative connotations synonymous with the idea of a 'limited' professional. This was not what Hoyle intended (Hoyle, 2008). Thirty years later, Hoyle comes back to his original idea with a regretful admission.

It was not made clear whether the two kinds of professionalism were to be treated as ends of a continuum or whether they constituted different 'factors'. This ambiguity has implications for the policy question of whether extended professionalism can be achieved without undermining classroom skills. Nor was it made clear whether the terms referred to behaviour, perceptions, expectations or prescriptions.

(Hoyle, 2008:292)

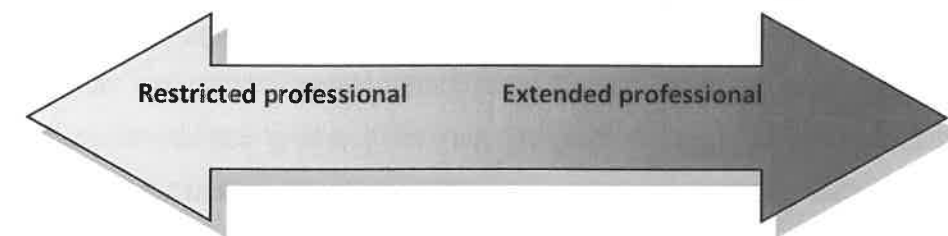


Figure 3.2: Hoyle's professionalism orientation of an individual on continuum (Evans, 2008)

Evans (2008) elaborates Hoyle's original idea of professionalism, with the term 'professionalism orientation', which helps to view extended and restricted professionalism more objectively. She argues that a teacher may orient herself in either direction for professional growth (Evans, 2008). What is missing from Hoyle's original idea about professionalism is a deeper awareness of social and political change. He later recognised that, as a result of the reform movement in the UK, extended professionalism became a requirement, in the sense of Evans' (2008) demanded professionalism, and could more accurately be termed *extended-but-constrained* professionalism (Hoyle, 2008). Hoyle worried that the UK reforms devalued one form of professionalism by imposing a distorted idea of another (*ibid.*). Hargreaves writes similarly about *distended professionalism*, which, for him, is characterised by the overburdening of teachers and the increasing depoliticisation of the teaching profession (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) propose three principles of teacher professionalism: high-quality teachers, powerful professional associations and professional learning communities. These are important for enabling teachers to participate actively in shaping the teaching profession. Hargreaves and Shirley (*ibid.*) develop the *new professionalism* to include 'deep and broad teaching and learning' that is created by teachers and which reflects the 'restricted and extended professionalism' continuum (Evans, 2008; Hoyle, 2008).

In my previous work on teacher professionalism in four schools of Kyrgyzstan (Teleshaliyev, 2013), I merge the notions of new professionalism and activist professionalism (Sachs, 2001; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) with the professionalism continuum (Evans, 2008; Hoyle, 2008). My adaptation is illustrated in Figure 3.3: 'deep teaching and learning' can also be enabled by a restricted professional, who has classroom and content expertise; 'broad teaching and learning' is enabled by the extended professional, who has a broader understanding of a school context and works closely with community members and parents. The concept of the professionalism continuum across two vectors allows an exploration of teacher practice in a complex interaction of individual teacher characteristics and the immediate surrounding environment.

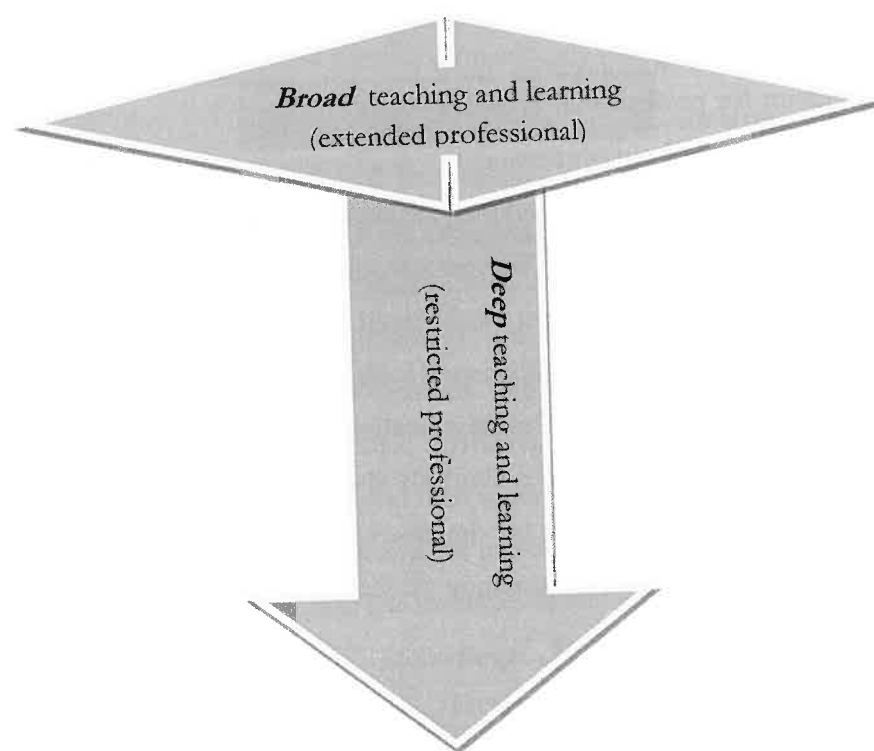


Figure 3.3: Two vectors of professionalism (generated from Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Hoyle, 2008)

Thus, I employ several concepts to explore the professionalism of Teachers with a capital 'T', each contributing to the understanding of professionalism in

different ways. I use the two vectors professionalism continuum as a flexible model to validate the wide spectrum of characteristics that make up teacher professionalism. I draw freely from the internationally established sets of criteria of the teaching profession and principles of new professionalism to guide my study on the characteristics of teacher professionalism in Kyrgyzstan, while questioning the relevance of the international notions of teacher professionalism in the Kyrgyzstan context.

Globalisation has established resonances in the contexts in which international and Kyrgyzstan teachers teach. In the next section of this chapter I look at the attributes of professional practice of teachers around the globe to identify those that may be relevant for my study.

### Global trends in enacted professionalism

This section explores the everyday practice of accomplished teachers in the US (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2009), experienced teachers in Tajikistan and Norway (Niyozov, 2011; Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012), expert teachers in Hong Kong (Tsui, 2009), veteran teachers in Israel and the US (Eilam, 2009; Marrantz Cohen, 2009), scholar-practitioners in the UK and Macedonia (Frost, 2012, 2013b; Sejdini, 2013) and *uchitelya innovatory* (teachers who innovate) in Russia (Sutherland, 1999; Tubelsky, 1995). These contextual studies provide a thick description of teachers' professional practice that reflects and extends the aspirant principles of the 'new professionalism' identified by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) (see Figure 3.1). Each example in this section demonstrates unique experience that offers insights for my study.

### Continuous learning

A distinctive characteristic of teachers involves their continuous learning and improvement. At the core of the professional development of teachers is the idea of the 'reflective practitioner', which calls for reflection in action and reflection on action (Schön, 1983). Schön argues that teachers need to find time to reflect on their actions in order to improve their practice. Teachers use their professional



judgement and questioning of their everyday practice to develop expertise. For example, some expert teachers in Hong Kong problematise unproblematic aspects of their practice and are not afraid to increase the complexity of their work by questioning the existing curriculum and teaching materials (Tsui, 2009). These teachers develop criteria that they use to select good and appropriate teaching materials. Expert teachers respond to and look for challenges, thereby engaging in learning that extends their competencies (*ibid.*). This particular characteristic reflects Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) principle of creating and recognising complex tasks in new professionalism. This characteristic may be equally reflected in restricted and extended professional practice.

#### *Transforming challenges into opportunities*

Tsui's study on expert teachers in Hong Kong argues that characteristics of expert teachers are distinct from those of non-expert teachers (2009). While teachers in her study are from the same school, they relate to the context of their work differently. Expert teachers explore every possibility to improve pupils' learning. For example, one expert English language teacher in a totally non-English environment creates an environment conducive to learning English: children are asked to speak English in her class all the time, and outside of their classroom children are asked to find any materials that include English. Tsui suggests that, while aware of the constraints of learning English in a non-English environment, the teacher makes use of every opportunity the context provides (*ibid.*).

Another teacher in Macedonia, who participates in the ITL project across 15 countries (Frost, 2012), leads multi-cultural and multi-lingual education in her school and neighbouring schools to tackle prejudice against other ethnicities in post-conflict Macedonia (Sejdini, 2013). Since the collapse of Yugoslavia, the newly established independent country of Macedonia has had to find ways to accommodate the educational needs of various ethnicities through multi-lingual education. Before the project was introduced, pupils in those schools were used to being taught separately based on their ethnicity and language. As a result of collaboration between teachers, children are now taught in multi-ethnic groups.

This example shows how the challenge of segregated classrooms can be transformed into an opportunity for multi-ethnic learning groups where each culture and language is appreciated by the other. An experienced teacher in Tajikistan has tried to introduce the importance of tolerance in his community between Kyrgyz and Tajik people by raising an awareness of pseudo ethnic tensions created by politicians and parents (Niyozov, 2011). Thus, teachers find solutions for addressing everyday difficulties in their work.

These examples demonstrate that teachers exercise several principles of new professionalism: discretionary judgement, continuous learning, commitment to collaborative learning, the creation of complicated tasks and recognising complexity (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). This feature clearly describes teachers who think of better ways to improve pupils' learning, both within and beyond their classroom, and can, therefore, be called extended professionals. It also shows that teachers demonstrate resilience by responding effectively to challenging working conditions around them.

#### *Devising strategies for responding to changes in environment*

An Israeli study of successful veteran teachers, with teaching experience ranging from 20-37 years, shows teachers' ability to respond to changes in the working environment in various ways (Eilam, 2009). The first group of veteran teachers fully adapt to a new environment and transform themselves by either staying in the same role and the same environment or by moving to a new environment and shifting their role in school. The second group do not transform themselves and remain within a new environment by prioritising their own educational preferences. As an example, many teachers in this group refer to a deceased teacher and his practice, who did not transform himself but serves as a wise and knowledgeable teacher for others. Teachers in the third group regenerate themselves by moving to new schools and discovering the value of educating children instead of just teaching a subject (Eilam, 2009).

In a different context, some post-Soviet Russian teachers find alternative ways to traditional teacher-centred teaching. During the *perestroika* time in the former

USSR, these famous *uchitelya innovatory* organised themselves and came up with the *Pedagogy of Cooperation* in 1986, which has questioned traditional teaching and established a new relationship of trust and cooperation between teachers and pupils, and their parents (Sutherland, 1999). The pedagogy brings new concepts of humanistic teaching: inspiring all pupils to learn by ensuring that pupils have self-confidence in their creative learning process; establishing self-government models by pupils; proposing to do away with giving bad marks or to give no marks at all to the younger children; encouraging pupils to learn to self-analyse by assessing themselves and their peers with no marks; helping parents to care for and love their children with respect (*ibid.*). In a changing political and economic environment, some teachers have started to address psychological problems of pupils caused by growing inequalities in society. Teachers enable *self-determination* by allowing pupils and teachers to collaboratively develop their own norms and rules in their school (Tubelsky, 1995).

These examples demonstrate the struggle for continuous learning and the ability of teachers to develop various survival strategies in response to continuous changes, including political ones. These teachers have had to adapt to changes by uniting their efforts and finding new ways of teaching throughout their teaching careers.

#### *Creating and sharing professional knowledge*

The creation of professional knowledge requires deliberative reflection by teachers (Eraut, 1994). For example, some expert teachers in Hong Kong develop their expertise by 'theorising practical knowledge' and 'practicalising theoretical knowledge' (Tsui, 2009:429). One expert teacher solves her dilemma of how to maintain discipline and make learning enjoyable for pupils by reflecting on how disciplinary problems can be solved from her pupils' perspective. She diverts her actions from maintaining order in the classroom to learning in the classroom. Her reflection on relationships between discipline and learning has become a direction in her practice. In other words, she is able to extend her practical knowledge at a theoretical level. Conversely, theoretical

knowledge she has gained from formal training on interactive teaching helps her to theorise her own practical knowledge. The same teacher then works with other teachers to improve the teaching of writing by reflecting with other teachers and helping them to learn from each other.

In the UK, certain teachers in the HertsCam Network, characterised as 'scholar-practitioners' (Frost, 2013b), demonstrate that they learn, analyse, research their practice, and lead change and development. One of these teachers developed a toolkit to evaluate school culture from the point of view of the students (Ball, 2013). The important insight here is that this unique professional knowledge, which is created through well documented and researched practice by this teacher, can easily be learnt and used by other teachers.

Similar practice is demonstrated by a number of accomplished teachers in the National Writing Project in the US (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2009). Authors argue that accomplished teachers are not necessarily teachers with more years of experience – rather they are teachers who are able to reflect on and articulate their experience. Teachers in the project reflect on their practice and openly deconstruct it for other teachers. By inviting other teachers into a learning dialogue, accomplished teachers facilitate the learning process for all teachers involved. Notable examples of sharing include: demonstrating favoured practice to each other; reading written pieces; and improving writing through feedback from other teachers (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2009). What I find particularly appealing is the idea of building a culture of professional critique and sharing. Each teacher performs the role of both teacher and pupil, which opens them up to learning new ideas. This practice is important in contexts with limited financial resources for professional development. The characteristics in these studies demonstrate the principles of working in a collaborative culture, prioritising team work over individualisation, and creating professional knowledge. The moral and social purposes of teaching are being set as a consequence of collective purpose.



### ***Loving their subject***

Certain non-conventional characteristics are demonstrated by some veteran teachers with over 25 years of experience in the US (Marrantz Cohen, 2009). In this study, prize-winning veteran teachers do not refer to altruism or love of children as their motivating factor; instead, they refer to their teacher-centred approach to teaching and love of subject as strategies for sustaining their professionalism. Veteran teachers in this study do not aim to build their teaching around pupils - their interest in teaching is centred on their love of the subject they teach. Marrantz Cohen argues that their choice of teacher-centred approach, as opposed to pupil-centred approach, is deliberate and helps them to teach long-term in a socially disadvantaged school. Love of subject emerges in this study as probably the most critical feature for veteran teachers to remain devoted to teaching (*ibid.*). The example of veteran teachers is important in questioning, perhaps, a stereotypical image of an experienced teacher who has only positive features. These characteristics also show that principles of new professionalism can be contested and debated, yet explored from different points of view. In this case, service for pupils and commitment to active care, as principles, are not deliberately prioritised by teachers. These studies also provide positive examples of restricted professionals – teachers whose preoccupation is more their teaching subject and less pupils' personal lives and wider school activities – who are nonetheless respected and regarded as real professionals.

### ***Mutual learning***

In the context of a collaborative culture in school, teachers learn from each other. In most cases, more experienced teachers are a resource of knowledge for new teachers. If experienced teachers in many countries serve as a resource of learning for new teachers, do more experienced teachers use the opportunity to learn from new teachers? A study in Norway looks at what experienced teachers can learn from new teachers (Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012). The findings reveal that some experienced teachers in Norway do recognise the value that new teachers bring: new ideas, digital competence, enthusiasm and flexibility, better understanding and communicating with pupils. However, new Norwegian teachers are not used as a resource for learning by experienced teachers. This

example does not suggest that learning among Norwegian teachers does not occur but rather that it could be more effective if teachers, regardless of their years of experience, would aim to learn from each other. Nevertheless, evidence from other countries about more effective ways of teachers working with each other proves the opposite: teachers do prioritise collaborative culture and continuous learning together (Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007; Frost, 2012).

I think this particular aspect of collaborative learning has to be considered as an important issue to explore among teachers in Kyrgyzstan to discover the extent of mutual learning that takes place and how it can be used by experienced teachers. I also assume that exemplary, experienced teachers in Kyrgyzstan are more likely to learn about digital technologies and behaviour patterns from new teachers than from outdated teacher training, and this serves as another reason to explore this feature of experienced teachers.

### ***Building objective knowledge***

In post-Soviet Tajikistan, the criterion of teacher professionalism is primarily related to teachers as the critical learners (Niyozov, 2011). An experienced history teacher judges critically scholars, who wrote textbooks both in the USSR and now, changing the perception of Islamist guerrillas from enemies of the Soviet system to freedom fighters. This teacher refuses to accept Islamists as freedom fighters by offering a critique of Islamic fighters before the Soviets came. At the same time a teacher is critical of the scholars' views, which ideologise historical facts in the Soviet textbooks (Niyozov, 2001, 2011). So, some teachers in Tajikistan use their expertise and professional judgement to provide as objective a worldview as possible in times of changing curricula and values. It shows that it is possible to approach the content of education and upbringing with objective criticism to provide options for their pupils to make their own decisions.

### ***Establishing collective autonomy***

Questions about the autonomy of the teaching profession, transforming professional teacher associations (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012) and teacher

activism (Sachs, 2001) bring a comparatively new and very much needed element of teacher professionalism. Some teachers around the globe demonstrate that they are able to raise professional issues with authorities, apart from demanding wages increments. There is growing leadership of teachers around the world to manage their profession and build a collective autonomy (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). The Alberta Teachers' Association in Canada allocated over 50 per cent of its revenue to the professional development of teachers (*ibid.*). Abdilhusein Khushnazarov, a Tajikistani teacher and educationist, established *Padida*, a creative teachers' organisation of 169 teachers, to provide moral and methodological support for creative teachers in his province (Niyozov, 2011). As a result, the best practices of creative teachers in Gornyi Badakhshan province of Tajikistan have been shared with other teachers. In Russia, several *uchitelya innovatory* established the *Pedagogy of Cooperation* association of teachers and educationists in 1986 to transform the authoritarian pedagogy (Sutherland, 1999). Even though it ceased to exist at the end of the 1990s, several individual teachers continue to address the issues of innovative and democratic pedagogy (*ibid.*). Simon Soloveichik, an educationist and journalist, who established the famous *Pervoe Sentyabrya* newspaper<sup>1</sup> for teachers in 1992 to allow critical voices of teachers to be heard, creates an open public platform for teachers in the former USSR. For 22 years teachers have been reflecting on the role of the teacher in the Russian Federation, pedagogy, education reforms and wider socio-political issues. In 2014, the newspaper decided to close down due to its unwillingness to compromise with the authorities on its critical stance and independent views. The only part that currently remains is the *Pervoe Sentyabrya* publishing house, which promotes innovation and programmes on curriculum subjects that are frequently authored by academic scholars who are independently critical of the government's initiatives and policies.

The continuous learning of the teachers in these studies demonstrates, firstly, the way they transform challenges into opportunities and develop strategies for

<sup>1</sup> The website of the newspaper was accessed on 5 December 2014. <https://ps.1september.ru/>

responding to changes in the environment; secondly, their love of their subject and deep knowledge of it; and thirdly, their ability to create and share their professional knowledge and learn from one another to foster a form of collective autonomy. These characteristics reveal a genuinely professional practice and an experience that is relevant for Kyrgyzstan. I apply these attributes of international teachers to the teachers in my study and, thus, the list of established characteristics is not exhaustive and additional attributes can be found.

In summary, my examination of the international literature on professional practice identifies three concepts in exploring attributes of the professional practice of experienced teachers in Kyrgyzstan, which make them exemplary for other teachers: *the seven principles of new professionalism*, *the professionalism continuum* and *teacher-enacted professionalism*. These concepts are relevant to Kyrgyzstan's context as they allow exploration of a wide spectrum of professional practice by teachers and, thus, contribute to my conceptual approach.

In the next chapter, I look at how teachers collaborate, interact, and influence other teachers and play a greater role in transforming their profession. In addition to Chapters 2 and 3, the next chapter also contributes to building my conceptual approach.

## Chapter 4: Conceptualising professional interactions

As I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, both professional commitment and professional practice have significant personal, individual dimensions. However, the factors that shape self-efficacy beliefs, commitment and resilience, as well as professional identity and practice, frequently rely on support from others, particularly other teachers; thus, they are also socially constructed.

In this chapter, I explore the literature relating to professional interactions of teachers to construct my conceptual approach of how teachers interact, engage and influence other teachers. I look at the concepts of social capital, collective learning, and non-positional teacher leadership that reveal how teachers' professional interactions might be more effective for leading change in teaching and education. Professional interactions include a range of activities, both formal and informal, that include collaboration between teachers, collective learning, mentor-mentee relationships, knowledge sharing, and various modes for providing advice and support, all of which have implications for how teachers can play a greater role in transforming their profession. The concepts reviewed in this chapter focus on how the elements of professional identity and practice can function in an integrated way, for while professionalism may be an individual aspiration, the teaching profession is a collective endeavour. If my research is to provide any insights into developing the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan, it must bridge individual perspectives on professionalism to reach where shared, commonly-held perspectives are to be found and understand how these can be strengthened.

### The role of social capital

The idea of social capital has been around since at least John Dewey's *School and Society* (1899) and has been used in social theory by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and more recently by others (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Ferragina, 2012). In relation to education, Coleman (1988) finds a connection between social

capital and dropping out of school and David Hargreaves (2001) explores how teachers leverage both intellectual capital and social capital to improve school outcomes. Ferragina (2012) writes that social capital theory describes an intangible form of capital that overcomes the 'classical definitions' of capital, which are primarily economic, making it more useful for social analysis. The notion of human capital, for example, is mostly used narrowly to consider human skills and abilities only from the point of view of how they serve the economy. My focus is on the role of social capital because it values human interactions, relationships and networks in ways that narrower notions of capital do not, as David Hargreaves (2001) points out in relation to intellectual capital, Leana (2011) points out in relation to individual capital, and Coleman (1988) and Andy Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) point out in relation to human capital. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) emphasise the role of social capital, as illustrated below.

*Social capital* is to be found in the collaborative patterns of interaction and levels of trust that contribute to the mutual learning and degrees of support that people enjoy as they seek to become more competent and confident in their work.

(Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012:49)

The nature of social capital rests on the relations between and among actors, not on the actors themselves (Coleman, 1988). This provides an entry point for my study because it lifts the focus from the individual to the relationships between individuals (Schuller *et al.*, 2000), more specifically, the relationships between teachers and other teachers with respect to how they cooperate and coordinate their efforts. It is also especially timely for Kyrgyzstan because the Education Strategy 2012-2020 (GoK, 2012), is steeped in human capital discourse, and consequently struggles to see beyond how many teachers should be educated, the requirements teachers should meet and how teacher accountability should be ensured. The strategy fails to grasp how teachers can be a useful resource for positive change.

Coleman's (1988) study, which focuses on pupils' drop-out rates in various American schools, suggests that a child needs support both from outside the family, within schools and communities, and from inside the family in order to

stay in school. His findings suggest that if there is insufficient trust in teachers or support for their work from the government, communities and schools, teachers are less likely and less able to help children to improve at school.

David Hargreaves (2001) elaborates on social capital and presents a theory of school effectiveness and improvement, which is partly based on the conventional model of school effectiveness with its input-process-output features. He utilises four concepts: outcomes, leverage, intellectual capital and social capital. Outcomes relate to the quality of the cognitive and moral life of pupils. Leverage is the relationship between teachers' input and educational output. Intellectual capital includes education, knowledge, skills and competencies of individual teachers. Social capital involves the degree of trust that exists between stakeholders and the extent and quality of the social networks that exist. Schools that are rich in social capital show high levels of trust among school staff and thus generate strong collaboration. The key to understanding his theory is in the interaction between social and intellectual capital. Morale and trust need to be promoted in order to mobilise intellectual capital. Low social capital among teachers means a lack of trust among teachers and they are, therefore, not successful in sharing their professional knowledge and skills. Ignorance of the social and moral aspects of school life potentially threatens the quality of education outcomes (Hargreaves, 2001; see also Coleman, 1988).

Trust, sharing and community are thus central components to social capital (Schuller *et al.*, 2000; Hargreaves, 2001). Trust involves the nature and quality of relations among members in the school community: trust is not built in a day, it is built every day. Bryk and Schneider (2002) see trust as an organisational notion that grows over time as people learn that they depend on each other's actions and are responsible for their own; it is a 'moral resource' for school improvement that 'helps to coordinate meaningful collective action'. Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010) show in a large scale study of 8,400 teachers and 470 school administrators in 180 schools that trust between school leaders and teachers results in higher standardised tests scores. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) point out that trust is widespread in the Finnish system of education: Finnish teachers

work together to make sure that each child is taken care of and provided with equal opportunities and there is mutual trust with the local Ministry of Education.

Recent research among 1,200 teachers in 130 New York City public schools points to the important role of social capital for teachers and their pupils (Leana, 2011). The findings show that social capital builds teachers' knowledge: for a teacher it is more likely that the source of expertise is another teacher, not the principal. This finding confirms the importance of trust and interactions between teachers.

Leana (2011) also shows that a teacher with low human capital within a school with a strong social capital can perform as well as teachers with average human capital (*ibid.*). If the links between teachers are strong, pupils' achievements improve. Pupils' achievements in mathematics improved in classes where teachers had frequent communication with other teachers on their subject. Pupils of teachers who work in an environment with high social capital, showed the best improvement in their achievements. These findings are especially important in an environment dominated by value-added models and a traditional school improvement approach. However, Leana (2011) remarks on how social capital is eclipsed by the emphasis on human capital in the current policy discourse and notes that it is consequently undervalued.

In trying to improve public schools we are overselling the role of human capital and innovation from the top, while greatly undervaluing the benefits of social capital and stability at the bottom.

(Leana, 2011:32)

Another study, led by Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) reveals a significant relationship between what they describe as 'collective teacher efficacy' and 'pupils' achievements'. Collective teacher efficacy refers to the collective belief of teachers that they can make a difference to their pupils. The findings of this study suggest that social capital may assist in improving pupil achievement and that collective teacher efficacy influences the behaviour of teachers by affecting the shared purpose held by teachers in school (*ibid.*). Social capital is thus

proffered as an explanation for the perceived link between teachers' professional growth and the improvements in their pupils' educational outcomes.

Even though developing social capital has not emerged as a cohesive strategy for strengthening the teaching profession, many strategies, such as building trust among teachers and information sharing, which are already in use by teachers to improve teaching and learning in schools, are integral to the notion of social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This demonstrates how social capital can be developed from the bottom up, and challenge existing patterns of thinking to enable new understandings about social relationships. Thus, social capital underlines the importance of the quality of human relationships, a crucial insight that is missed in narrower economic thinking on the idea of human capital (Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000).

However, Munn (1999) and Schuller *et al.* (2000) point out that social capital can equally have anti-social consequences: exclusion and bullying at school or in crime syndicates such as the mafia or racist organisations. Consequently, some researchers regard social capital to be not fully tested as an idea and open to analytical and political abuse (Schuller *et al.*, 2000; Field, Schuller & Baron, 2000). Unlike human capital, for which economic measures can be quantified, measuring social capital poses methodological challenges (Schuller *et al.*, 2000); but overall, researchers regard it to be a promising concept and a useful analytic tool for researching school life (Munn, 2000). Ultimately, social capital is a helpful notion because it acknowledges that human interactions are complex and layered. It points to potential enquiry in a direction that may deliver questions as well as answers but which avoids the narrow and misleading certainties of the human capital approach (Schuller *et al.*, 2000).

Social capital is significant in my study for two reasons: it focuses attention on the interrelations and trust between various education stakeholders, particularly on how experienced teachers might better support and influence other teachers, and is subsequently a tool for innovation in schools to improve teaching and learning together. There are many ways in which teachers in schools 'learn to

work and learn together, to be reflective, to share their practice, to focus on student learning, to give and receive useful feedback, or to build shared understandings of fundamental ideas about schooling' (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014:1). In the next section, I take a closer look at teachers' collective learning to explore insights into how social capital may be created and nurtured.

### Collective learning

In this section I review literature on modes of teachers' collective learning including communities of practice, professional learning communities (PLC) and less-formal collaborative learning arrangements such as mentoring, peer coaching, and critical friendships. Wenger (1998) regards the idea of the community of practice to be at the centre of teachers' learning as it reflects the social texture of commonly held knowledge. The community learns as the quality of education improves and draws in new members. Wenger (*ibid.*) identifies three characteristics – domain, community, and practice. The *domain* is the area of knowledge that needs to be improved, which also unites community members and keeps them focused. The *community* includes members who interact with each other and develop relationships to address problems, to share knowledge and enable learning. *Practice* involves the practical knowledge community members accumulate and own (Wenger, 2004). Essentially, a community of practice is a bottom-up initiative; it needs, however, to be recognised by peers and supported by school management, and continual feedback is important (*ibid.*).

The idea of a PLC where teachers seek opportunities to engage professionally with each other is put forward as a model for a community of practice by Sachs (2003), Fullan (2007) and Hoyle and Wallace (2009). The PLC focuses on how experienced teachers influence other teachers. Historically, the concept of the PLC grew out of a range of interrelated ideas, including: Stenhouse's (1975) idea of teachers as classroom 'researchers' and his 'teacher as curriculum developer'; Bolam's (1977) 'problem-solving school'; Little's (1982) notions about 'learning on the job' and 'collegiality'; Schön's (1983) 'reflective practitioner';

and Lieberman and Miller's (1984) 'schools as collaborative cultures'. Several recent studies concur that the PLC has become one of the more effective models for teacher professional growth (Bolam *et al.*, 2005; Day, Sammons & Stobart, 2007; Day, 2009; Frost, 2012).

PLCs emerge in Western practice as a response to the top-down approaches that disempower teachers. Stoll *et al.*'s (2005) point is that PLCs take this impulse a lot further as they extend teacher collaboration and leadership as deliberate strategies for reshaping the teaching profession and reforming education from the bottom up.

A professional learning community is an inclusive group of people, motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways, inside and outside their immediate community, to enquire on their practice and together learn new and better approaches that will enhance all pupils' learning.

(Stoll *et al.*, 2005:1)

Four *domains* of PLCs are relevant for my study.

- 1) *Enhancing pupil learning* is the main purpose of the PLC rather than the development of teachers (Bolam *et al.*, 2005; Stoll *et al.*, 2006). This is based on the conviction that pupils are the main focus for education (Hoyle & McCormick, 1976). It involves the participation of pupils in the learning and teaching process and encourages teachers to 'connect emotionally' with pupils in order to understand their lives and issues more fully (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Day, 2009).
- 2) *School leadership* plays a key role in building and promoting PLCs as it provides the conditions for encouraging teacher effectiveness (Day *et al.*, 2007; Day, 2009; Day *et al.*, 2011). Experience in the ITL project in 150 schools across 15 countries, shows that involving school principals from the beginning of the project maximises impact (Frost *et al.*, 2011). Several other studies demonstrate the importance of school leaders in strengthening the effectiveness of PLCs (see Day's (2009) VITAE study, and Sammons, Gu, Day and Ko's (2011) study in 740 low performing schools in England). The

role of the school principal is to create a school culture where everyone is empowered to achieve joint goals (Frost, 2012) and all efforts become part of a 'unified commitment' (Stoll *et al.*, 2006).

School principals can create conditions for collegial action; they cannot guarantee it will be achieved (Stoll *et al.*, 2006). However, PLCs are a vehicle for creating learning conditions for teachers in several ways: first, by 'buffering' teachers from distractions in their work, such as expectations from parents and the government (Day *et al.*, 2011); second, by providing an environment that encourages teachers in their work (Day, 2009); and third, by providing a space for reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Day & Saunders, 2006).

Top-down reform constrains school principals' actions, so changes to teaching and learning happen in PLCs in schools where principals are willing to take risks (Day *et al.*, 2011). School principals need strategies to deal with bureaucracy and will benefit from *distributed leadership* (Spillane, 2006; Stoll *et al.*, 2006), in which teachers engage in tasks that are 'stretched' or distributed in schools; and PLCs provide a place where teachers can be given opportunities to lead changes in teaching and learning. So, as discussed earlier, in relation to the support of school principals for teachers' self-efficacy and resilience (see Chapter 2, pp.27-28), the support of school principals is equally important for teachers to exercise their leadership skills.

- 3) *Partnerships with communities, parents and other outside structures* that teachers need to help address pupils' increasingly complicated needs are opened by PLCs (Mitchell & Sackney, 2007). The HertsCam Network and ITL projects (Frost, 2012) demonstrate an effective collaboration between the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education, school teachers, and local government to facilitate school-based professional development and school development (*ibid.*). This characteristic of the PLC is associated with the extended professionalism of teachers that I explore in my study and suggests that teachers may involve partners outside of school through their



unique practical knowledge. The likely reason is that the practical knowledge of school teachers dominates the discourse in this collaboration: teachers lead projects they are passionate about, and they create a 'teacher-centred literature' (Huberman, 1985) that empowers other teachers. This authentic 'practical knowledge' (Frost, 2012) is more in demand and appreciated by teachers than university-produced knowledge.

- 4) *Collective learning* rather than individual professional learning is an important aspect of PLCs (Stoll *et al.*, 2006). Collective learning requires a community of learners that prioritises 'norms of innovation' over 'norms of privacy' (Little & McLaughlin, 1993). Stenhouse (1975) argues that the strengths of individual teachers cannot be effective unless they are fully supported by the school, an observation that becomes significant in my study. A community of learners requires teamwork and 'opening the doors of the classroom to colleagues' (Fullan, 2007). Working together in PLCs is based on a constructive and productive discourse by teachers, who are open to positive self-criticism and criticism by others and are constantly improving practice. Such an approach based on 'culture, trust and human relationships' is an essential attribute of successful PLCs (Hargreaves, 2007). Survey data show that in professional communities where privacy prevails, teachers continue to regard their jobs as routine, bureaucratic and static (Little & McLaughlin, 1993).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) and Little and McLaughlin (1993) express a word of caution about PLCs: they may create a shared vision that supports 'shared delusions' that prove to be resistant to reflection and problem solving (Little & McLaughlin, 1993). For example, PLCs may drive strategies that concentrate on student performance in tests and/or achievement gaps, and teachers in these PLCs may perpetuate the separation between pupils' learning and pupils' lives. In such PLCs, 'the data *inform* but ... [will] not *drive* judgements about practice' (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009:92-94).

Whether in the context of a formal PLC, or a less formal community of practice within a school, various modes of collective learning are important for my study: mentoring, peer coaching, and critical friendship (Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007). These collective learning modes are important for providing ongoing learning opportunities and helping teachers not to become atomised in their work.

*Mentoring* involves structured personal support that aims to enhance competence (Bush, Coleman, Wall & West-Burnham, 1996). Despite a lack of clarity about the nature of the relationship in mentoring (*ibid.*), mentoring is used in the post-socialist space as a regular part of school-based induction programmes for newly qualified teachers, who are paired with experienced mentor-teachers (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2007; UNICEF, 2011). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) believe that mentoring processes can also be beneficial for both the mentor and mentee because not only can new teachers benefit from a mentor, but mentors can also learn from their protégés. However, they make the point that mentoring can play a greater role in improving schools only if it is fully conceptualised and becomes an integrated part of school culture (*ibid.*).

*Peer coaching* includes more than just explanation and demonstration of skills: it builds a dialogue around obtaining and practising teaching skills. It thus has a practical focus and requires the establishment of trust and a bond between partnering teachers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Peer coaching can be especially helpful when teachers have common issues or problems they want to share and discuss. Teachers need to have one goal in peer coaching arrangements – to improve teaching for the better performance of pupils (Swafford, 1998). This outcome focus helps to create a community of teachers that aids professional growth (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Mutual feedback enriches the understanding of theory and practical experience as each party coaches the other.

Coaching implies that teachers observe each other and give feedback to see how far the skills have been practiced; they examine the appropriate use of the strategy; and they engage in collaborative problem solving and action planning sessions.

(Wallace, 1991:21-22)

Peer coaching provides technical support for teachers, including instructional practice and emotional support, which helps teachers to feel positive in, and sustain, their profession (Swafford, 1998). More importantly, coaching enables teachers to regularly reflect on their teaching and learning practice (*ibid.*). An adequate social organisation of a school is essential for peer coaching to prosper (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). As with mentoring, all teachers should ideally participate in peer coaching to improve instructional practice and to influence school culture (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

*Critical friendships* broaden the scope of perception and experience (Norris, 1997), providing opportunities for raising challenging questions based on a trusting and supportive relationship. Critical friendships function well and consistently when they are supported by a structured in-school process or, at least, a school culture that promotes critique and encourages teacher collaboration (Stoll *et al.*, 2007). Swaffield (2004) points out that critical friendships provide a versatile form of support for self-evaluation, collaboration and networking. While friendships that may be critical are often established within schools, Swaffield (*ibid.*) points out particularly that external involvement is essential for successful critical friendships (see also Fullan, 2001). Fahey and Ippolito (2014) draw from four areas to frame a general theory of Critical Friends Groups: adult development, organisational culture, school change and transformational learning. They posit that such groups function to build shared norms and values, providing a mechanism to help members of the group to hold each other accountable and stay faithful to their ideas.

Teachers' effective collective learning thus seems to involve the willingness to accept a level of ambiguity and complexity, and the commitment to confront challenging questions about the purpose of learning and professional practice. The literature suggests that this does not come easily and needs to be supported by protocols that function as 'structures that help educators try out different ideas, examine assumptions, ask unsettling questions, and embrace discomfort in a way that is safe and manageable' (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014:3).

In the next section, I explore the role that teachers without a designated leadership role can play in professional learning communities in schools.

### Teachers' non-positional leadership

The huge demands that are placed on schools today require leadership at every level. However, in most schools, most important decisions are imposed top-down, or made by the school principal or administrators and carried out by teachers. Teacher leadership has become an important idea for teacher organisations and education academics. In an organisational context, leadership is viewed as:

a social *influence* process whereby *intentional* influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation.

(Yukl, 1994:3)

Teaching is regarded as a 'flat profession' in which increased experience does not necessarily mean increased responsibility or more significant professional challenges. Where teachers take on formally designated leadership, it is usually either in their specific subject area or in the form of a new administrative role. Possibly because of the flat nature of the profession, designated, or formal, leadership roles have been shown to place barriers in communication between teachers as they create hierarchical ladders that distance colleagues who formerly worked at the same level (Smylie, 1992; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1995). On the other hand, informal leadership roles can be attractive because they build on perceptions of credibility, competence and accessibility that are already in place (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Formally-designated teacher leadership also undermines voluntarily-initiated teacher leadership; this was the experience with the introduction of Teacher Leader Model Standards in the US (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008). The standards put forward requirements for teacher leaders, reinforcing the impression that teachers need to meet these requirements in order to be leaders. This has things the wrong way around. My definition of informal teacher leadership builds on the idea that teacher leadership should be initiated



voluntarily by teachers who willingly choose to support and influence other teachers.

Frost (2012) points out that in effective PLCs teachers practice non-positional teacher leadership, which operates independently of their assigned institutional roles and responsibilities in the school. Teachers are able to become 'agents of change' and make a difference in schools (Durrant & Holden, 2005; Frost, 2006) and are more likely to 'transform their mode of professionalism' (Frost, 2012). Frost (*ibid.*) argues that by encouraging teachers to practice leadership without formal authority, more teachers exercise leadership to build their PLC. The link with PLCs is what makes me primarily interested in non-positional teacher leadership, as my focus is not on teachers who are leaders within the formal organisational structure (Crowther, Ferguson & Hann, 2002; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Non-positional teacher leadership in PLCs, such as that demonstrated by teachers of the HertsCam Network in 90 British schools (Frost & Durrant, 2002; Frost, 2003, 2005) and the ITL project, offers an alternative engagement for teachers in education reform (Frost, 2012). Teachers learn, enquire and share their self-created knowledge with their colleagues and, thus, bring change to the whole school.

[Non-positional teacher leadership] ... whereby teachers can clarify their values, develop personal visions of improved practice and then act strategically to set in motion processes where colleagues are drawn into activities such as self-evaluation and innovation. This approach rests on the assumption that the enhancement of human agency within a culture of shared responsibility for reform and the outcomes for all students is essential for learning for all members of learning communities.

(Frost *et al.*, 2011:10)

The teachers who practice non-positional leadership in the ITL and HertsCam Network projects demonstrate that 'teachers lead innovation in their schools, build professional knowledge together, develop their leadership capacity and influence colleagues, improve their own classroom practice, develop and embed improved practice in their schools' (Frost, 2010:26, 2013). However, as with

Critical Friends Groups, these positive characteristics emerge only if supportive structures and strategies are established in schools. Based on the ITL and HertsCam Network experiences, these enabling strategies and structures include:

- appropriate methodologies for teacher leadership
- partnerships with external agencies
- deliberate cultivation within the schools
- appropriate contexts for knowledge building.

Teacher leadership is nurtured through specific methodologies for strategising and leading the process, building partnerships with universities, local authorities etc., practicing a culture of 'distributed leadership', and creating a critical network of teachers and schools to enable platforms for knowledge building (Frost *et al.*, 2011).

Based on the ITL concept, Frost also urges that school principals need to understand the culture of 'distributed leadership'. He posits that 'non-positional teacher leadership' might be problematic in countries with no 'tradition of professional school leadership and it is unlikely that governments will be able to create sophisticated programmes of training and support in the near future' (Frost, 2010:25). That is why the concept of the ITL project suggests the involvement of the school principal from the outset 'to develop their skills in orchestrating teachers' innovations so as to maximise impact and achieve some degree of strategic coherence on the development of the school' (Frost *et al.*, 2011:48).

Thus, teachers of the ITL and HertsCam projects demonstrate that they are able to exercise leadership by deliberately initiating changes in their schools and setting an example for other teachers. These teachers have an ability to influence other teachers and set the pace for other teachers to remain resilient and committed professionals. Their mutual collaboration also encourages the building of social capital. However, teachers need support and a stimulating environment in order to function in this way. Thus, my study considers the understanding and support that is available within the school community, how

this enables experienced teachers to share, and how this encourages new teachers to seek support.

In summary, I identify three key concepts – *social capital*, *collective learning*, and *non-positional teacher leadership* – in order to help me understand how teachers may collaborate and interact. My interest is in how these relationships lead to both strengthening the teaching profession and improving education in Kyrgyzstan. *Non-positional teacher leadership* in particular emerges as a key idea for understanding how experienced teachers can lead the change in their schools; my research explores how this idea translates within the Kyrgyzstan context. It will be helpful to see how forms of collaboration and collective learning are useful for describing the professional interactions of respondents in my study. I shall be careful not to apply ideas about collective learning, professional learning community or non-positional leadership in a purely instrumental manner (Schuller *et al.*, 2000), because these remain analytical concepts in many ways. None are an automatic consequence of completing certain actions. These notions nonetheless provide guidance on how experienced teachers interact with and influence other teachers, and more importantly what kind of support is necessary to help teachers to do so more effectively.

In the next chapter I discuss how the concepts related to professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions shape my conceptual approach. I also discuss methodological considerations and lay out the research questions for my study.

## Chapter 5: Methodological considerations

In this chapter I discuss the conceptual approach to my study; I present my research questions and describe the study design and methodology, which includes data collection and analysis approach. I also consider the ethical implications and the limitations of the study.

### Conceptual approach and research questions

I employ three aspects of teacher professionalism from the international literature: professional commitment, professional practice, and professional interactions. These interrelated and intersecting aspects of teacher professionalism provide the three ‘idea clusters’ that form the basis of the conceptual approach to my study on Kyrgyzstan’s Teachers with a capital ‘T’.

(1) Self-efficacy, resilience, moral purpose and *prizvanie* shed light on the commitment to a high quality of teaching every day and the long-term, or continuing *commitment* to teaching. As this commitment is the hallmark of experienced teachers, I describe this cluster as the ‘professional commitment cluster’.

(2) Teacher-enacted professionalism, its principles and the professionalism continuum provide guidance to describing *professional practice* and point to where and why other teachers may wish to emulate Teachers with a capital ‘T’. I describe this cluster as the ‘professional practice cluster’.

(3) Social capital, community of practice and non-positional leadership explain how Teachers with a capital ‘T’ *interact* with and influence other teachers, as well as how they engage with the life of the school and potentially affect the community or even policy. I describe this as the ‘professional interactions cluster’.

The Venn diagram below, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, provides a representation of how these aspects of professionalism interact in my study. The attributes of Teachers with a capital 'T' are likely to be located in the intersections between the circles, an interrelatedness that I believe is supported by the international literature. The specific focus for my study is the heart of the diagram, the point at which the three circles intersect, or where the aspects of professionalism converge. The extent to which teachers are regarded as being highly professional in their commitment, practice and interactions matches the professional attributes that are most associated with Teachers with a capital 'T'. My study focuses on the nature of the professionalism of these teachers, who are considered to be exemplary in each of these aspects of professionalism: exemplary in their commitment, exemplary in their practice and exemplary in their interactions: I refer to them from now on in this thesis, for convenience, as *EEE Teachers*.

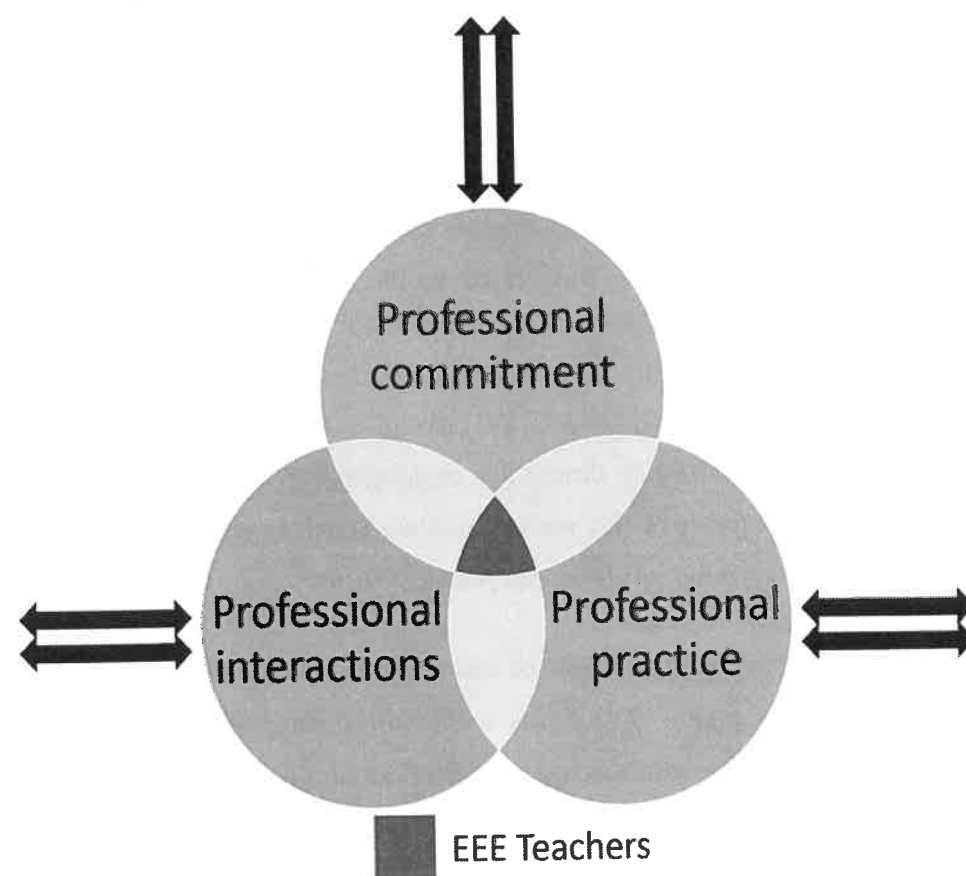


Figure 5.1: Pictorial representation of my conceptual approach: EEE Teachers are considered to be Exemplary in these three areas.

The Venn diagram is situated in a force field, depicted by two-directional arrows that represent the effects on all aspects of professionalism exerted by the context and *surrounding environment*; the effects on professionalism of context is an attending and equally central idea in my conceptual approach. My use of the word 'context' should be taken to mean the immediate surrounding environment such as school, community, family and the current wider policy and political environment; as well as the temporal, historic and relational elements that are associated with the idea of context. I thus use the word context comprehensively to include all contextual factors that shape the professionalism of EEE Teachers. This would include, for example, the effects of support provided for teachers on the likelihood that teachers demonstrate resilience, improvements in teaching and collaboration with other teachers. This contextual 'force field' thus reflects the dynamic effects of all external factors on aspects of professionalism and how individuals, in their professional practice, and in a sense professionalism itself, respond and push back, in turn, to reshape and remake the environment and redefines its context.

My conceptual approach gives rise to three essential research questions:

*What factors contribute to the continuing commitment of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan to teaching and the teaching profession throughout their careers?*

My exploration of this question was informed by understanding the complicated interaction between personal, professional and contextual factors that shape self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), resilience (Luthar *et al.*, 2000), moral purpose (Fullan, 1993) and *prizvanie* (Sukhomlinsky, 1984), which drive the commitment and motivation to improve teaching and become experienced teachers.

*How do EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan enact their professionalism?*

This question addresses what EEE Teachers do every day to shape their professional practice to become exemplary teachers. This question builds on the previous question regarding resilience and commitment; it examines how teachers improve their practice in and beyond the classroom, and probes the elements that constitute teacher professionalism in practice, rather than those

assumed in policy or theory. 'The seven principles of new professionalism' (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), the 'professionalism continuum' (Hoyle, 2008; Evans, 2008) and the criteria of the teaching profession (MacBeath, 2012; Niyozov, 2011) provide better understanding for my exploration of professionalism enacted by EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan.

#### *How do EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan influence other teachers?*

This question considers how the practice of EEE Teachers and their engagement with other teachers influence other teachers, policy makers and stakeholders. The growing insight into the social capital (Coleman, 1998; Hargreaves, 2001; Leana, 2011) of teachers, community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and their relevance in education reform provided a helpful perspective for exploration. The concept of non-positional teacher leadership (Frost *et al.*, 2011) shed a light on teachers' ability to lead and change. Therefore, initiatives of EEE Teachers may influence policy making related to their profession.

The answers to these questions, of course, require a rich contextual exploration, which leads not only to a deeper understanding of the answers that emerge about EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan and the conclusions that may be drawn, but also enables insights into the commonalities and differences with other teachers internationally. The purpose of my research is to inform both policy and practice in Kyrgyzstan so that EEE Teachers are better supported in the system in order for there to be increasing numbers of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan's schools.

#### **Research design and methodology**

In my study I explored how EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan stay committed to teaching, maintain professional practice, and collaborate with and influence other teachers; as such it focused centrally on the everyday work and lives of teachers in their unique personal, social, economic and cultural contexts. As a result, teaching and learning practice of EEE Teachers were results of social interactions between all members of a school community. Teachers made sense of the world through their own social and historical perspectives, and this

understanding, in turn, shaped their personal lives and work experiences. These insights reflected key philosophical tenets of qualitative research and for this reason I employed a qualitative approach in my study. My desire to understand professionalism contextually at first suggested that a case study approach would be the most appropriate for my study. Case study methodology offers an exploration of contextually situated practice (Merriam, 1988): this would involve the personal and professional issues that affect each teacher directly, as well as the broader policy and socio-political context in which these direct experiences are imbedded. However, my approach would require a more integrated form of analysis than a comparison of separate cases would allow. My research design was thus not a multiple case study design even though my methodology drew much from the case study approach.

#### ***Drawing from case study methodology***

A case study is a process of 'setting' the parameters that help to identify and allow the exploration of a particular phenomenon, which in my study is a construct: the professionalism of the eight teachers and, more specifically, what makes them committed? How they enact their professionalism? And how they influence others?

A case study design is employed to gain an *in-depth understanding* of the situation and *meaning* for those involved. The interest is in *the process* rather than outcomes, in *context* rather than a specific variable, in *discovery* rather than confirmation.

(Merriam, 1998:19)

Yin defines 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' as the defining feature of the case study as a research strategy (1994:13). While he describes the case as a 'bounded phenomenon' he makes the point precisely that boundaries between the phenomenon and its contextual influences are not necessarily fully discernible (Yin, 1994).

In my study I explored how the professionalism of EEE Teachers was shaped through their interactions in the school context with (1) pupils, other teachers, a school principal. The professional characteristics of the EEE Teacher were also explored in the family context represented by (2) various personal and professional issues that concern the EEE Teacher. The wider context represented concerns of the EEE Teacher related to non-school environment interactions with (3) parents, community members, state authorities, and the ways these had an impact on shaping professionalism of the EEE Teacher. I do not suggest that I examined family and wider contexts in-depth, however, I listened to EEE Teachers and, based on their information, I explained the role of factors in family and wider contexts in shaping their professionalism. Finally, (4) the perspectives and attributes of the researcher also have bearing on the presentation and interpretation of the case. The interaction of these four elements in case study methodology is considered to be a *bounded phenomenon* (Merriam, 1998). It is helpful to explore the professional attributes of EEE Teachers, within these 'boundaries', precisely because, in Yin's sense, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The case study approach and qualitative research generally share the specific limitation that arises from the researcher being the main instrument for data collection and analysis, and thus being dependent on subjective notions of 'sensitivity and integrity' to safeguard objectivity (Merriam, 1998). On the one hand, my own 'involvement' in the case was what made it possible for me to learn first-hand about EEE Teachers and their social interactions and concerns through their voices and eyes. This 'involved researcher' role allows for a rich description that conveys the voices and actions of teachers and challenges the subjective opinion of the researcher in the narrative (Stake, 1995). It offers insights through its description of complex processes and the unchanged original voices of teachers that accompany this description. On the other hand, I need to clarify the bias that I bring to the study. I return to this in the later section about reliability and validity.

### *Sampling and generalisability*

My study involved eight individual EEE Teachers in four different schools, with two teachers per school. Each of the eight 'cases' revealed a variety of situations and behaviours with similarities and differences. My study of eight teachers in four schools provided a loose set of 'eight cases', but it did not follow the design for a 'collective case study' (Yin, 2009), in which each case study explores a dimension of a larger overall case study about teacher professionalism; neither did my study of the eight teachers in four schools provide a strict comparative analysis within a 'multiple case study design' (Stake, 2006). My study purpose was not to assemble a collective description of professionalism or undertake a comparative analysis. I thus employ a case approach without adopting a strict multiple case design for my study. Each EEE Teacher was a unit of analysis that might support generalisations about EEE Teachers and their attributes; taken together they may suggest some 'generalisability' of findings (Merriam, 1998) but they are by no means representative of all EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan. They allowed for theorisation and tentative generalisation about the commitment, professionalism and leadership of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan, for generalisability, lies in 'the particular' - what is learnt in a particular situation can be replicated or generalised to similar cases subsequently encountered (Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 1998).

When we see a particular instance of a teacher teaching, some aspects of what occurs are absolutely generic, that is they apply cross-culturally and across human history to all teaching situations....Each instance of a classroom is seen as its own unique system, which nonetheless displays universal properties of teaching. These properties are manifested in the concrete, however, not in the abstract.

(Erickson, 1986:130)

To address the issue of generalisability, which provides a challenge for my study, I applied two sets of criteria in choosing my sample of schools and teachers. One set of criteria was for selecting schools and the second was for selecting teachers. I selected schools according to these criteria, which represent the whole spread of 'typical' public secondary schools, which include Grades 1 to 11, in relation to language of instruction, urban/rural location, and the size of school.

The secondary schools in Kyrgyzstan are called *orto mektepter* (secondary schools), and combine both primary and secondary schools. They are as follows:

- Two Kyrgyz-speaking schools, one Russian-speaking school and one school with mixed language of instruction. These are based on the representation of schools in Kyrgyzstan: schools with Kyrgyz language of instruction are 65 per cent of the total; schools with mixed language of instruction are 22 per cent; Russian speaking schools are 9 per cent; schools with other minority languages 4 per cent (NSC, 2014)
- Two schools are rural, one urban, and one suburban on the basis that rural secondary schools in Kyrgyzstan are 82 per cent of the total, and urban comprise 18 per cent (NSC, 2014)
- One small-sized (up to 500 pupils), two middle-sized (between 500 and 1000 pupils), and one large-sized school (over 1000 pupils).

Due to limited financial resources, the schools were selected in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, and the adjoining rural Chui province in northern Kyrgyzstan, which might not necessarily reflect the spread of schools in other Kyrgyzstan provinces that are located farther from the capital. Permission for entering and collecting data in schools was granted by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic (MoES). The selection of schools was in liaison with the MoES. The list of typical schools was verified with the Ministry's staff before final approval to ensure fair broad representation of schools across Kyrgyzstan.

In each school I selected two teachers through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), which ensured that my sample of experienced and exemplary secondary school teachers was as representative as possible of the spectrum of experienced and exemplary teachers in Kyrgyzstan, thus providing possibility for generalisation in my study. The criteria were related to their influence and position in school, their expertise, their experience of working with other teachers, their professional growth and years of teaching experience.

The criteria for selecting the teachers were as follows:

- teachers who have established positive relationships with other teachers, are regarded by their colleagues as being influential on other teachers, and are positive, resilient and well-respected
- teachers who are competent and demonstrate expertise in their subject knowledge and in their teaching
- teachers who are approachable for other teachers, and who have developed their own professional knowledge and are willing to share it with other teachers
- teachers who previously participated in training on innovative methodology of teaching and learning
- teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience. According to official data, teachers with more than 15 years of experience comprise 51 per cent of the total number of school teachers in Kyrgyzstan (NSC, 2014)
- teachers should not hold an administrative post in school, e.g. school principal or a deputy principal.

To ensure the best representation of teachers based on their ethnicity, gender, and teaching subject, I also used these criteria to strengthen the possibility of generalisation:

- at least two teachers represent an ethnic minority, as schools which practice two languages of instruction or other than Kyrgyz language comprise about 35 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan (NSC, 2014)
- at least one teacher represents the male cohort of teachers, which is a significant minority in Kyrgyzstan at 17 per cent (NSC, 2014)
- teachers teach humanities or sciences subjects.

My preference for purposeful sampling was also based on the need for a careful selection of individual teachers who could offer relevant-to-the-topic information needed for qualitative research. The rationale behind purposeful sampling, according to Patton (1990), lies in 'information-rich cases' that need to be studied in greater depth and detail. Selection of the sample must be rigorous, explicit and thorough from the perspective of the purposes of the research.

The process of selecting the eight teachers was carried out in two stages. During an introductory meeting with a school principal I asked for several teacher candidates who met the criteria. The names given were then compared with the names that were provided by teachers at the end of a focus group discussion, when teachers were asked to identify teachers who they considered met the above identified criteria and who inspired them. Teachers were asked to identify teachers anonymously, individually, and in written form in order to follow ethical norms.

### **Data collection methods**

The main data collection instruments included (1) individual interviews with the eight teachers in four schools, (2) focus groups with a group of teachers in each of the four schools, and (3) observations of lessons taught by each of the eight selected teachers. These main instruments were supplemented by (4) individual interviews with four school leaders, and (5) analysis of documents relating to each of the schools and each of the eight teachers. The combination of these instruments allowed a degree of 'triangulation' of data (Yin, 2009) to support the validity and reliability of my study. Research questions relating to commitment, professionalism and leadership were explored in focus groups and observations of interactions among teachers.

#### ***Interviews with school principals***

The interview with each school principal provided the entry point for the school. These interviews took place in January and February of 2014. In this one hour semi-structured interview, the purpose of the study and the practical requirements were explained, a letter from the MoES requesting support for the study was delivered, and the study schedule was adjusted to accommodate the timetable of teachers and the school principal or deputy principal. The interview questions probed the qualities of who the principals considered to be exemplary and experienced teachers in the school, their role in the schools, the collaboration with other teachers, and the role of a principal in creating a learning environment

for teachers. The interview also covered general information about the school and teaching staff profile, and the schedule of teachers' meetings for the year (see Appendix I).

As an interview is a time-consuming exercise (Oppenheim, 1992), interviews with school leaders were limited to four school principals. During all interviews, including those with eight individual teachers, I used the same approach to investigate motives and feelings, turning the interview into a personal exercise for the interviewee (Bell, 2005). The interview is a personal encounter, which is why it was important for me to establish trust and mutual interest at the outset (Bell, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Oppenheim, 1992). I followed DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree's four steps of in-depth interview: apprehension, exploration, cooperation and participation (2006). At the outset I encouraged the interviewee to talk by asking broad, open-ended questions and providing enough time for reflection and thinking until the interviewee was comfortable and started to provide information. In the subsequent exploration stage, I strengthened 'bonding' by listening and learning from the interviewees. Once we were able to converse in a free and relaxed way the interview had reached the cooperation stage. Full trust was reached by the participation stage when an interviewee started to guide and teach the interviewer. It was necessary to practice active listening and probing throughout the interview.

#### ***Interviews with eight teachers***

Interviews with the eight teachers were organised around my three research questions, which necessitated a set of three interviews with each teacher focussing on commitment, professional practice and interactions with other teachers. I employed a three-step approach in the interview (Seidman, 1998): ideally each teacher would have three interviews, and each interview would last about an hour with a set of probing questions (see Appendix A) to ensure that teachers provided data related to each research question. An interview protocol (see Appendix E) was also used during interviews. However, in reality some teachers allocated more time and were excited about sharing their experiences



and it went beyond the intended time. I did not try to discourage teachers from speaking and telling me their stories because the initial first interview set the tone for teachers to share their stories and I wanted the established trust between us to be there throughout. For example, with some teachers it took three interviews, with others it took up to six interviews because their stories and answers were valuable for my study. Each interview had a set of probing questions, which were used to answer all three research questions accordingly.

Establishing trustful relationships with eight teachers was a key element in my data collection process. By using a narrative approach in the beginning of my first interview with each of eight teachers, I intended to treat them more as 'informants' on their own experiences and less as 'respondents' (Alasuutari, 1995). Connelly and Clandinin also argue that, very often, teachers feel disempowered in the research process, but in narrative they have an opportunity for their voice to be heard (1990). In this trusting researcher-teacher relationship, teachers are more likely to be empowered and willing to participate (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997). Indeed, once teachers recognised that the study was about their personal and professional lives' experience, they became genuinely interested in my study and shared their information and secrets (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) without reservations. This made shared teacher knowledge very personal (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). What was important was letting teachers talk freely about their life experiences from the beginning in order for them to feel at ease. Teachers felt very proud that someone from outside would be interested in, and find use in their stories, and it was very important for them to be heard. So, at every sequential interview teachers appeared to be committed to talk to me. I also allowed teachers to ask me questions to establish trust between us.

A narrative approach was essential for generating an authentic picture of their experiences. At the very beginning of the first interview, the eight teachers were asked to reconstruct the *chronology* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) of their teaching career, including significant life events, both positive and negative, from early career stage to present day, which influenced their decision to become a teacher and remain committed to the teaching profession. It was important that

the teacher was given enough time and space to tell their own story (*ibid.*). However, the use of interview with a narrative approach did not involve full life history (Alasuutari, 1995; Robson, 2002), which tends to tell the whole life story in details. In my study the emphasis was on targeting the specific aspects or stages of their lives, which played a crucial role for shaping their professionalism. For example, if a teacher talked about a stage in her experience when she thought of leaving the profession, I let our discussion linger on this particular moment in order to understand what the decisions to remain in school and teach involved.

A narrative approach was used to capture the complexity of issues surrounding teachers. The narrative approach also helped to capture the whole story and aimed for 'verisimilitude' (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To clarify this, Clandinin and Connelly use a 'professional knowledge landscape' metaphor, which includes all aspects of human life-space, place, time, people's relations, events, and things (1998). These dimensions were important in compiling field texts as memory accounts of events and writing a narrative later on (*ibid.*). The idea of a landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) was useful for my study as it calls for a rich description of complex interactions between personal, professional and contextual factors that shape self-efficacy beliefs, resilience of teachers and consequently influence their professionalism and ability to exercise leadership skills.

During my initial interview with eight teachers, sometimes teachers got carried away by their stories and so I had to remember that I had to collect the data to answer my research questions. I explored only those elements of the individual narratives that were relevant to the research questions. One of the disadvantages of the narrative approach was the possibility of losing important moments and getting too involved with other elements in the story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Teachers all understood when I asked them to return to a question or provide more detailed information needed for my study. I found it extremely helpful during my study to keep myself on track for seeking the data I needed.



Another issue to consider relating to narrative approach in interview was the bias of the researcher in reconstructing teachers' narratives accurately. I came back to teachers with my reconstructed narrative of their stories to verify that it was an objective account of their initial narrative. Teachers corrected me if I got something wrong in their narrative. I also used their own narratives to construct my questions for successive interviews. However, while analysing the narrative for my study I also followed a suggestion that the researcher should take a critical stand while listening and interpreting information (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gudmundsdottir, 1996). I discuss my critical approach to avoid bias and triangulate various sources of data later in the chapter.

Thus, by letting teachers speak and reconstruct their past and link it with the present, trust was established and the first interview set the tone for successive interviews. All eight teachers were genuinely interested in reminiscing about their past experiences of becoming a teacher and remaining committed to the profession over the years. As I progressed with the first interview, I got to the second and the third interviews which were more thematic and semi-structured with probing sets of questions about professional practice and influence on other teachers. The interviews also included questions about their working conditions, thus providing contextual information for analysis, including examples from both the personal and professional lives of teachers.

The first interviews took place in March 2014 (see Appendix H). Once the key significant events in each teacher's life and experience were told in the first interview I was able to 'live the story' with the teacher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and return to their narratives and key moments of their lives later in the second and the third interviews. In the second interviews, which took place in April and May 2014, I addressed the second research question about professionalism. The second set of questions focused on the *details* relating to the eight teachers' lives and work. I asked questions that could help me to guide our conversation about teacher professionalism (see Appendix A). For example, the eight teachers were asked to relate 'how they grow professionally?', 'how they collaborate with other teachers?', or 'how they spend a working day in

school?' Such questions provided insights into the contextual factors: interactions with other teachers, relationships with school leaders, pupils, parents etc.

Seidman suggests that the success of a third interview depends on previous interviews (1998). So, the set of questions in the third interview were constructed in the context of the previous interviews. The third interviews took place in September 2014 and addressed the third research question about influence on other teachers. In the third interview, the eight teachers were asked about their initiatives and role in school, collaboration with other teachers, and enabling environment for teachers. For example, questions such as 'How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the school leaders to make the school run more effectively?' and 'Think of one memory when you influenced teaching or other aspects of schooling in your school?' returned to the questions about collaboration between teachers; however, they aimed to test the eight teachers' capacity to deliberately lead innovations and influence other teachers to bring change to their school. The capacity of the eight teachers to build or contribute to social capital in their school, and the support given to teachers to do this were the main topics for exploration in the third interview.

### *Focus groups*

I used focus groups to interview groups of teachers and initiate discussion of common problems, concerns or issues which an individual teacher might not have thought of before (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Focus groups also allowed the collection of large quantities of data at low cost (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) and with minimum time commitment for teachers who were very busy and overloaded. A focus group discussion with teachers in each school preceded interviews with the eight teachers and followed interviews with the school leaders. Four focus group discussions for five to ten teachers were planned, one in each school and 20-40 teachers in total, in January and February 2014. The criteria for selecting teachers for focus groups were based on years of teaching experience, subject and gender. The sample had to include teachers from three groups: young teachers with less than 5 years of experience, teachers with more

than 10 but less than 20 years of experience, and veteran teachers with more than 20 years of experience. School leaders were not allowed to participate in focus groups to provide an opportunity to ordinary teachers to express themselves and make them at ease. At least one teacher was a male teacher. The sample had equally to include teachers of humanities and sciences.

Focus group discussions provided information on collaborative practice and identified what matters to, and what concerned, teachers, thus providing answers mostly to two aspects of my conceptual approach, namely teacher-enacted professionalism and interactions and collaborations with other teachers. Focus group discussions provided data mainly for the second research question on teacher professionalism, and the third research question, as well as rich contextual information relating to their work. The open-ended questions (see Appendix B) were grouped into five sets of questions. The first set of open-ended questions explored how teachers developed themselves professionally. The second set of questions probed the nature of collaboration between teachers, followed by the third set of questions that tested areas of collaboration between teachers. The fourth set of questions explored what kind of support was needed for teachers to collaborate and grow professionally. The final set of questions helped to identify how teachers initiate and lead in their school and potential candidates for the eight teachers' interviews. Teachers were asked to provide characteristics of Teachers with a capital 'T', without naming them, and reasons why they considered them role model teachers. At the end of the focus group, all teachers were asked to write, confidentially, the names of Teachers with a capital 'T', based on proposed characteristics and criteria for selecting the eight teachers. Based on the comments of teachers in the focus groups and recommendations of school leadership teams, two teachers were selected in each school.

There were several considerations regarding focus groups. Despite a challenging setting of group dynamics (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987), it was a perfect instrument for sharing collegial issues in a group. A lot depended on my moderation to ensure that the conversation was guided and balanced among all participants

(Rubin & Rubin, 1995). From my previous experience, I elicited the opinions of teachers who kept silent and listened attentively for valuable data. Active listening can lead to more probing questions and provide a direction for 'follow-up' (*ibid.*). Even though it was impossible to establish a trusting relationship in a focus group meeting of only an hour or so, I created a comfortable and trusting environment for teachers by starting informally with serving tea and snacks (*ibid.*).

### **Observation**

Observation was an important instrument for data collection throughout the research process as it generated information on professional practice and interactions of the eight teachers, and complementary information to interviews. It helped to compare what teachers said with what they actually did in practice (Robson, 2002). I employed 'open-ended, unstructured observation' (Hargreaves, 2012) to address all research questions. In order to address the first research question about commitment of the eight teachers I observed interactions of these teachers with school colleagues at school formal meetings – the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department or methodological unit meeting) and *pedagogicalyk keneshme* (all-teachers meetings or pedagogical council meeting) to see what kind of in-school support those teachers received from their colleagues and what factors contributed to their professional commitment. Observing the eight teachers in their classrooms helped me to address the second research question about their professional practice: their teaching and learning approaches, knowledge production and care for pupils. Eight teachers were observed teaching in their classes to explore how they teach pupils and their relationships with pupils. Observation data provided invaluable data about the professional practice of teachers, which were hidden in interviews with the eight teachers. For example, one teacher, when asked about her approach to teaching skills, did not mention a word about a pupil with a speech disability in her class and the importance of inclusive education for her practice. However, when she was observed in a class, that teacher demonstrated her best skills in involving that pupil into classroom discussion. It was not the only case when teachers did not mention anything special in their practice, saying that everything they did

was usual. While the shyness of some teachers during their interviews caused them to 'hide' their best practice from me, these elements were discovered in observations of their lessons.

It was also helpful to see how the eight teachers interacted with parents at parents' meetings in relation to the *tarbiya* (upbringing) of their children, and the nature of collaboration between teachers and parents in addressing the education of pupils. The eight teachers were also observed in interaction with other teachers through mentoring or training schemes to explore a professional learning community in a school. For example, hidden tensions and power dynamics among teachers were found during observations of their meetings, which were not necessarily openly mentioned in their interviews. The third research question regarding the eight teachers influencing other teachers was addressed by observing eight teachers working collaboratively with other teachers to improve teaching and learning. Meetings of methodological units and pedagogical councils provided necessary information about the school culture that was nurtured by teachers in school: to what extent teachers deliberately led their own initiatives on improving schools and engaged their colleagues in professional discussions; and what kind of support was provided for teachers by school leaders.

Apart from observations of the eight teachers, I kept field notes in which incidental observations about other teachers, the school leader and the school were recorded. Thus, observations of eight teachers contributed to the data for all three research questions. Observations also provided rich data about the school environment, which was needed for understanding the environment surrounding teachers and the factors that shape their professionalism.

The disadvantage of observation is that it cannot guarantee how representative a single observation is of normal events (Robson, 2002). In order to escape bias during observation, observation data were triangulated with the data received from interviews and focus groups. At least three observations of the eight teachers in various settings were conducted, e.g. classroom, methodological unit,

mentoring session, interaction with parents etc., during the period January to May 2014 (see Appendix H). An observation protocol was developed to record what had been observed during each encounter (see Appendix C). At the beginning of each observation I asked each teacher to introduce me to her colleagues or pupils, so that those being observed were aware of my role as an observer who was not going to participate in their activities. I understood that my role as an observer would influence 'the normal behaviour' of people; however, I made clear to all participants the purpose of my presence and the goal of my study, and that the primary subject of my observation was the selected teacher, so that those who were observed felt more relaxed and behaved in a more natural way. This aimed to minimise the impact of my intervention on normal group processes.

### *Document analysis*

Documents and artefacts were used in my study primarily for general background information. Teachers produce a large quantity of documents due to heavy bureaucratisation processes that surround schools. Numerous documents were available within a school: school plan of activities, lesson and curriculum plans, teacher portfolios, protocols of parents' meetings, teacher evaluation materials, photographs, policy documents etc. During my school visits I searched for and collected documents, which were mentioned and provided by teachers during interviews, or which could offer information about everyday professional activities of teachers, and which could serve as additional evidence for my research questions. Artefacts such as teacher portfolios or visual aids created by them were photographed with their permission. The documents also provided important contextual data about the school or environment in which the eight teachers work. For example, a teacher mentioned an article in a newspaper written by some teachers anonymously criticising the school principal. By reading this article, I understood more about the dynamics in that school and human relationships.

The documents were not analysed using a systematic 'content analysis' (Robson, 2002). They were read and interpreted for the purpose of creating different

documents, and how they were used by teachers in their work. The documents were not coded as the rest of the collected data, but were added in the form of description or interpretation, as additional information to the data drawn from main data collection methods. The language and the nature of the documents showed to what extent these were initiated by or imposed upon teachers. More importantly, document analysis was helpful in looking at what teachers accumulate as their professional knowledge, such as a teacher's portfolio, manuals, authoring and whether these were used by other teachers. Materials such as action plans for the school year, plans of the pedagogical council and methodological unit, or teachers' plans for the year provided essential information to track documented collaboration between teachers and their individual plans. Documents were also important for planning my study and adjusting my schedule to the dates set within the working calendar of school and teachers. Thus, the content of documents provided evidence of 'tangible' products of teachers' practice and addressed the second and the third research questions about teacher professionalism, as well as informing me about their own initiatives, and the context of teachers' lives and work. Document analysis provided insight into the research questions (Merriam, 1998) and contributed to data triangulation. The advantage of this instrument was its 'unobtrusive' nature, in that the documents were not 'affected' by their usage (Robson, 2002), and I strived to be similarly unobtrusive in my collection of data by other means. The documents requested from teachers after or during the first interviews started in January 2014 and ran through to December 2014.

Interview questions and focus group discussions were tested as my research instruments in two randomly selected secondary schools in November 2013. The piloting of questions for individual teacher interviews and questions for focus groups took place before the actual field work started. As a result, some questions were similar or had to be reinterpreted to make it clear for teachers. For example, when the purpose of my study was explained I used the word combination 'teacher leadership', which I realised had to be explained in a different way because teachers either understood it as an assigned leadership or asked for clarification.

In Table 5.1 I summarise the research instruments which were used for data collection and how they correspond to the research questions. It also includes units of analysis and timeframe (see also Appendix H):

Research questions	Methods			
	Interviews	Focus groups	Observations	Document analysis
What factors contribute to the continuing commitment of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan to teaching and the teaching profession throughout their careers?	Eight EEE Teachers: 03/14-06/14		Eight EEE Teachers: 02/14-06/14	
How do EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan enact their professionalism?	Four school principals: 01/14-02/14; Eight EEE Teachers: 03/14-06/14	20-40 teachers of four schools: 01/14-02/14	Eight EEE Teachers: 02/14-06/14	Teachers' portfolios, authoring, action plans for the school year; plans of the pedagogical council and methodological unit; teachers' plans, curriculum plans, teacher evaluation materials and policy documents:  01/14; 03/14-06/14; 09/14-12/14
How do EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan influence other teachers?	Eight EEE Teachers: 09/14-12/14	20-40 teachers of four schools: 01/14-02/14	Eight EEE Teachers: 09/14-12/14	01/14; 03/14-06/14; 09/14-12/14

Table 5.1: Research questions and methods

## Data analysis

The analysis of data started at the same time as the data collection, in January 2014 (see Appendix H), and lasted through the whole course of my study. Case study and qualitative researchers use various strategies for analysis, which have one thing in common – ongoing reflection of gathered data in order to identify patterns, themes or categories (Merriam, 1998; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). One consideration for my study was to be aware that ‘case oriented’ research generates a lot of data and the only way to deal with the analysis of increasing streams of data was to keep myself focused on the research questions and examine if the data were relevant to the research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

I used the following steps of ‘thematic analysis’ (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) and ‘category construction approach’ (Merriam, 1998). As soon as the data were transcribed and translated from Kyrgyz and Russian languages into English, the process of analysis started: I read through data to attempt (1) to determine sentences or words in interviews, focus groups and observations which related to my research questions. Each data source was examined against a particular research question in order to identify an *emerging pattern* within each ‘case’. This initial step made data more manageable during analysis if frequently used words, ideas or sentences were quantified (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), and provided a starting point for classifying emerging patterns, which were not anticipated and were suggested by multiple manifestations in the data.

Once the key sentences or words were determined in the data within each ‘case’, I (2) coded and sorted the data into various emerging patterns to identify major *themes*, which were specific and explanatory. Coding was necessary at that stage, when the themes were given a unique code (Tesch, 1990 cited in Creswell, 2009:186; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Examples of codes created for resilience and resilience factors are illustrated in Table 5.2. These codes were then numbered to help locate data related to certain concepts and research questions.

Abbreviation	Explanation of the code	Data Number
<i>Resilience:</i>		
RES	Resilience - ability to prevail in adversity	2.3.
RES-POSAT	Positive attitude towards adversity	2.3.1.
RES-POSEM	Positive emotions in teachers	2.3.2.
RES-PASSION	Teachers are passionate about their teaching	2.3.3.
RES-RES	Teachers are resourceful despite adversity	2.3.4.
<i>Resilience factors:</i>		
RESFAC-PERS	Personal factors relating to the personal lives of teachers	2.3.5.
RESFAC-SIT	Situated factors relating to the school lives of teachers	2.3.6.
RESFAC-PRO	Professional factors relating to teachers’ values and beliefs	2.3.7.
RESFAC-SOV	Strong sense of vocation among teachers	2.3.8.

Table 5.2: Codes for themes

Coding allowed organisation of the data systematically to be able to interpret the data and find meaning in these data at later stages of analysis. At the next step, (3) each major theme was checked for presence and substance. Then the number of entries for each major theme were counted in (3a) various sources of data, and (3b) each of the eight ‘cases’. At this stage the level of analysis was limited to each individual ‘case’. Each individual ‘case’ was analysed as a separate ‘case’ because each ‘case’ had its own distinctive features and contextual information. As the process of analysis in each ‘case’ was reflective, major themes could be revised during the course of analysis. At this stage the major themes were preliminarily identified in each of the eight ‘cases’.

At the next step, (4) the identified major themes were grouped into overarching categories across all eight ‘cases’. These categories were named according to the purpose of the research (Merriam, 1998) and included various sources of evidence to support research questions from both individual ‘cases’ and across the eight ‘cases’. Table 5.3 provides an example how data were organised: excerpts of transcripts of teachers’ interviews, which were pulled together to provide the data for the research question on resilience factors. The data were

organised by an *emerging theme* and a *corresponding concept*, e.g. RESFAC as an abbreviation for resilience factors.

Transcript	Comment	Emerging theme	Concept code
<i>I think my grandmother influenced my decision of becoming a teacher because she wanted to become a teacher herself but she could not and remained an ordinary worker on a collective farm's field. She used to show me her calloused hands and set an example for me of her friend who was a teacher. That is why I told everyone since my childhood that I want to be a teacher. (Ainura, Semetey School)</i>	Influence of close relatives in becoming a teacher	Family support	RESFAC-PERS, RESFAC-PRO
<i>My father taught me to learn so that I can give away what I have learnt to other people later on. (Marina, Manas School)</i>	Influence in forming a teacher's belief and value	Family support	RESFAC-PRO
<i>First of all, support for me starts in the family, at home. When they all support me I am very glad. My children and husband tell me that they understand me and teaching is an interesting part of my life. They tell me they are interested in my stories about my teaching. Second of all, if some teacher or a young teacher would ask me a professional question and get interested in something, I personally think it is a support for me. (Chynara, Seitek School)</i>	Family support is an important factor for a teacher	Family support	RESFAC-PERS
<i>My husband is against my working in school because he does not have higher education and works as a driver. When the food is not ready and he is alone at home he is not happy. My daughter helps to prepare food for my husband. My children help me and understand me. We found a common language with him when our children grew up. But before, when the children were young, I worked only one shift and came back</i>	Challenging for a female teacher to be a teacher and perform the traditional role of a housekeeper	Family support	RESFAC-PERS

<i>home earlier. (Ainura, Semetey School)</i>			
<i>All my life I do what I like [teaching] thanks to my family members. They provided me with such opportunity. If I did not have my husband next to me, like many female teachers do, I simply would not survive with my current wage. (Larisa, Kanykey School)</i>	Financial and other support for a teacher by a family member	Family support	RESFAC-PERS

Table 5.3: Organisation of data across all eight 'cases'

As can be seen from the steps described, there were two stages of analysis – first for each teacher in her unique context and then comparatively between teachers. This is very close to the case study approach (Merriam, 1998). The comparative analysis of all eight Teachers allows for tentative generalisations about EEE Teachers and their professionalism in Kyrgyzstan.

It was also important that while collecting and analysing data, the data were constantly probed to compare against the main elements of my conceptual approach. My reflective journal (Watt, 2007; Ortlipp, 2008) also contributed to ongoing analysis of data. All doubts, thoughts and biases were reflected there to make the analysis process productive and thoughtful.

### Research ethics, validity and reliability

The quality of education research is judged on its validity, reliability and observance of ethical principles (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 1998), which in turn are closely interrelated with each other.

### Ethics

In my research I followed the ethical principles set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) to respect all aspects and objects involved in a research:



- the person
- knowledge
- democratic values
- the quality of educational research
- academic freedom

(BERA, 2011:4)

These five principles can clash and it is important to keep them balanced (Pring, 2000). For this reason, I obtained consent from all participants to their involvement in the study (see Appendix D); and participants were guaranteed confidentiality of location and identity. I considered it to be important to explain the purpose of my study and guarantee of anonymity before the actual interviews started in order for both teachers and myself to feel informal and to be able to concentrate on the interviews. Teachers also appreciated that their confidentiality was guaranteed, which provided them with assurance that they could talk openly with me. The BERA ethical principles were very useful, but they do not accord with expectations of respondents in Kyrgyzstan, who do not usually sign consent forms.

What I found useful for thinking about integrity and ethics in my study was Macfarlane's (2009) 'virtue approach'; he argues that simply following a code of ethics might not be helpful during the course of the research. A researcher, he argues, needs to employ engagement with her or his 'own character and belief system' (p.156). Ethical principles and integrity must be personalised and there needs to be 'a sense of what is right and what is wrong' (*ibid.*). I follow this approach and draw on my own experiences and reflections on who I am and what I am doing. Macfarlane sees this as a 'struggle with personal conscience' (p.166): I can only be a more ethical researcher by questioning and reflecting honestly on the choices I make and the actions I pursue.

I was very cautious not to cause harm to the eight teachers' reputations in their schools by talking about them with their colleagues. My study involved very personal information that was shared by the eight teachers in their narratives.

Due to achieved trust between teachers and me, the eight teachers shared very confidential information about their school and their colleagues, which could have harmed them and easily made them vulnerable. I handled the information provided very carefully by using 'legible redaction' (Huckaby, 2011) in transcribed texts to mark confidential and sensitive information of teachers by using the strikethrough font feature (*ibid.*). The strikethrough sentences reminded me that the text and interpretation of it should be treated in a special way. I also never made public information that teachers shared with me, nor did I talk about any of the eight teachers with other teachers. I did not personalise in any way, but rather talked broadly about the characteristics of these teachers. Explaining to teachers how data were collected and how much time would be involved was important to help them understand and so that they would not feel imposed upon.

Finally, the transcribed individual interviews and narratives were shared with all eight interviewed teachers immediately after transcription to ensure accuracy, and as requested by teachers in the consent form (see Appendix D). According to Bassey (1999), teachers may realise that they have not said what they meant to say in an interview or a narrative. Thus, it was essential to check collected data for accuracy with teachers and allow teachers to revise material if needed. This approach made the study participatory (Merriam, 1998) and also allowed for validity insurance of the study. All narratives, interviews, and focus groups were recorded digitally, fully transcribed, and the locations and names of interviewees were coded, once full consent was provided.

### ***Reliability and validity***

In my qualitative study I collected and analysed data and, therefore, the lenses that are used to explore teachers' lives and work are inevitably subjective. According to Merriam (1998), it is difficult for the researcher to unravel personal bias and expectations. I recognised that my positionality, which was described in the introduction and which reflected my previous experiences, beliefs and understandings, was carried with me into my study and might have impacted on

my interpretation and analysis of data, especially concerning top-down reforms and accountability. For example, my belief that teachers might play a greater role in shaping their professionalism and influence education policies also made me aware that I could show bias against top-down policies. However, my personal experience of this study has brought new perspectives, e.g. other people's constructions. So, this has challenged my thinking and made me aware of my potential subjectivity and ways of addressing it.

At that stage ensuring transparency (Ortlipp, 2008) for myself and my reader was an essential consideration, as I expected conflict between my various roles as a researcher, an instrument of the research, a listener and a teacher's supporter. Several researchers recommend keeping a 'reflective journal' (Watt, 2007; Ortlipp, 2008) throughout the whole research process as a way of disentangling personal presumptions and bias in interpreting the data and as findings emerge. The value of reflexivity was what reminded me that the study was about discovery and learning, not about recycling preconceived ideas. Thus, I looked forward to an encounter with my data that helped me understand my area of research and enabled me to grow as a qualitative researcher. In my journal I reflected my regular records of experiences, assumptions, bias, and discussions of theoretical material. Those records were examined, and later incorporated into the analysis of findings (Morrow, 2005). I kept my reflective journal to ensure that neither validity nor reliability of my study was compromised and that my biases and preconceived ideas were questioned.

Apart from keeping my reflective journal, I employed several strategies to ensure the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bassey, 1999) of my study. Firstly, I used triangulation (Yin, 2009) of raw data from various sources to make confident analytical statements or emerging findings. Constructing validity and reliability of my study was addressed by providing multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Using various sources of evidence brought confirmatory as well as contradictory data (Mathison, 1988 cited in Merriam, 1998) to support certain statements or findings. For example, collecting data

from the eight teachers in four schools contributed to the validity and reliability of my study. The eight respondents used their own narratives to explain to me the key factors and moments in their lives that made them decide to become and remain teachers. I kept that narrative to the original as much as I could in my writing and analysis. Secondly, I created a database by organising and documenting the data collected. A database included digitally recorded and transcribed interviews, focus group discussions and documents. This strategy contributed to the reliability of the study by providing access for any other researcher to my future database. Finally, involvement of 'critical friends' (Norris, 1997; Bassey, 1999) among researchers and colleagues, who do not necessarily share my world views but have expertise in the area, helped to question my findings and provide critical feedback on research processes. I shared my study with colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged.

Special attention was given to gender sensitive issues. I was aware of the fact that I was a male researcher in female-dominated schools. That fact brought certain challenges in establishing my positionality. Interviews can be affected by sexist attitudes and behaviours (Seidman, 1998). Preconceived ideas about female or male teachers may reinforce stereotypical gender roles. For example, I did not assume that either female or male teachers had more challenges in balancing their personal and professional lives. In the traditional Kyrgyzstan context, it was easy to assume that female teachers were more preoccupied with family issues, such as the upbringing of their own children, or that male teachers had more time for teaching by allocating less time to their families. There is also the false assumption of shared values was established between an interviewer and interviewee of the same sex (Seidman, 1998). I addressed these issues by asking male and female teachers the same questions about their roles in family and school. I reflected on transcribed interviews and shared them with peers to examine whether I had employed any sexist assumptions (Seidman, 1998). It also helped to pay attention to differences in how people of different gender communicate and tell their stories.



Differences between interviewers and interviewees do not necessarily create obstacles to communication (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). However, I was aware of the aspect of power in the interview (Alasuutari, 1995) between me and interviewees. For example, the power dynamics affected the situation during interviews depending on various aspects: (1) I was probably viewed by female rural teachers in the very beginning as a powerful knowledgeable urban male person, which changed once they learnt that I was there to learn about their experiences; (2) all teachers were older than me and at some stages this age difference played a role when I became their younger colleague who could be given friendly advice. I established trust with female teachers before an actual interview by visiting their classes, talking to them informally about common problems and allowing them to ask me questions about my study. Those strategies encouraged female teachers to feel at ease with me and made my study more objective in relation to gender issues. So, our conversations became of a reciprocal nature (*ibid.*).

#### **Limitations of the research**

Lack of funding for fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan was the main limitation of the research. That constraint allowed involvement of only four schools in Chui province of Kyrgyzstan, as inclusion of the other six provinces would have involved greater travel costs. Travel would also involve significant time and funds, so schools were selected within a 60 km distance of the capital of Bishkek within Chui province. The sample of four schools was not representative of 1,876 public secondary schools (NSC, 2014) but reflected the typicality of these schools. The same related to the eight teachers, who represented teachers of various profiles. At least three interviews were conducted with each of the eight teachers, which already required processing of 24 interviews and significant time. However, the interviews and observations of teachers undertaken allowed exploration of the relevance of, and interest in, commitment, professionalism and leadership of the eight teachers as they reflected the different types of public secondary schools taking into account area, size, language of instruction and various teachers' practice.

In summary, my conceptual approach involved three dimensions of professionalism: a 'professional commitment cluster', a 'professional practice cluster', and a 'professional interactions cluster', these come together to reflect the attributes of EEE Teachers at the point at which they all intersect. These attributes are examined within the personal and professional contexts of EEE Teachers, where the boundaries between subjects of the study and context are not distinctive. For this reason I use qualitative research methodology with some elements of the case study approach. The study involves eight teachers in four secondary schools, who represent typical experienced teachers and schools of Kyrgyzstan. Research methods for data collection included interviews, focus groups, observations and document analysis.

In Chapter 6 I introduce the eight teachers in four schools as the main respondents in my study by presenting narratives about their respective teaching careers.

## Chapter 6: Introducing the eight respondents

In advance of the presentation and discussion of my research findings in the chapters that follow, I introduce each of the respondents on whose insights and experiences I draw so extensively. The real names of the respondents as well as the four schools have been changed to maintain anonymity and ensure confidentiality for the respondents. The respondents are between 46 and 71 years of age, and seven of the eight respondents are women. The sample includes two teachers from each of the four schools. Their individual teaching experience ranges from 23 years to 49 years. Three of the respondents are formally retired but still teach. At the time of the interviews, five of the respondents were a *class jetekchi* (class tutor). In Kyrgyzstan, many schools are combined primary and secondary schools; they are referred to in Kyrgyz, nevertheless, as *orto mektepter* (secondary schools). The four schools are *orto mektepter*; two of the respondents are teachers in the primary sections of their schools.

### Marina and Aigul of Manas School

Marina and Aigul teach in Manas School, a dual Kyrgyz and Russian language suburban school 35 km from the capital of Bishkek. Manas School is a typical middle-size suburban secondary school in Kyrgyzstan with 938 pupils and 50 teachers. It is located in a district centre with a population of about 12,000 people. Aigul, a mother-tongue Kyrgyz speaker, has retired but has been teaching full-time biology and chemistry for 43 years. Marina is Russian-speaking, and is a pre-retirement Russian language and literature teacher who has been teaching for 36 years.

#### *Marina's story*

Marina is one of the most resilient and committed of the respondents, who faced several challenges in her personal and professional life. Despite the challenges, she constantly shows positive emotions and commitment to the profession. When Marina was a school principal 15 years ago, some teachers in her school

complained about her strict behaviour and about discipline and ethics in her school. She decided to step down voluntarily because she was tired of what she regarded to be, the 'intrigues behind her back'. Also, her son needed special care because he suffered from asthma and she wanted to be able to care for him. After she stepped down, a teacher who she had hired became the school principal. The new principal wanted Marina to leave. Marina nevertheless found strength to stay on in the school as an ordinary teacher.

*I perhaps failed as a manager, but not as a teacher. Those who complained about me behind my back did not kill my faith in myself as a teacher. They showed me another way for my development. If I continued to be a school principal, I would not realise myself as a teacher. Actually, I never lost belief in myself as a teacher. I am an optimist in life. Like in Tolstoy's novels, I fell and got up, fell again and got up again. It happens to me all the time. I still make mistakes and get up...I need to have a strong will to do it.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Marina continued to teach in the same school for another 29 years of her total 36 years of teaching. Her father, who was an evacuee from Saint Petersburg during WWII and had lost his parents and family, taught her to be strong and resilient from childhood. When she graduated from secondary school, she failed her entry exam to the history department because her strong defence of her own opinion turned into an argument with an examiner. She entered the Russian language and literature faculty as a part-time student. She worked at the same time and managed to send her wage home to support her ailing mother and help her father.

Marina lost her husband a few years ago; he was very supportive of her choice of profession. She says she had very good mentors when she started teaching, and she tries to be a good mentor to teachers who learn from her. It is likely that she is the most respected teacher in her school when it comes to professionalism, helping other teachers and having respect for pupils. She treats pupils equally and wants them to succeed in their lives.

Marina is often asked to conduct open lessons for teachers from other schools and various inspections. She is regarded as an exemplary teacher. As she is a person with professional integrity, she worries about what she regards to be

'increasingly unprofessional people' teaching in school. Marina is close to retirement; she very often thinks how it would be if she left teaching. She has difficulty imagining her future without her school and, more importantly, without caring for her pupils, who she thinks need her.

#### *Aigul's story*

Aigul wanted to become a doctor but she did not score enough points to enter the medical academy. She then decided to become a biology and chemistry teacher. Both her parents were teachers and they wanted her to become a teacher. Her father used to say that teaching is not just a profession; it is all about upbringing and providing knowledge to human beings. She would observe their preparation for classes at home. She remembers that the teaching profession was well-respected in Soviet society and teachers were regarded as people with high levels of integrity and honesty.

Aigul has been through a lot in her 42-year teaching career. There were times when many teachers left the profession but she never thought of dropping out. Even during the period when wages were not paid for 3-5 months at a time or provided in the form of flour or sugar, she continued to teach and take care of her three children.

Aigul remains committed to teaching despite what she regards to be the highly unethical behaviour of her school principal who, she considers, recently insulted her and undermined her professional achievements. Aigul relates an upsetting incident. She received a presidential award for teaching and the *El Agartuu Otlichnigi*<sup>2</sup> title. She applied for the award on a competitive basis and was selected by the Ministry of Education as a winner at the provincial level. But before receiving the award, she was called in by the district department of education and her school principal and accused of receiving the award because of her connections rather than on the basis of merit. She was seriously insulted.

<sup>2</sup> A merit of distinction in teaching that denotes government recognition but provides no financial incentives. A teacher needs to submit documents to be qualified and also the candidacy needs to be approved at school. There are two other honorific titles: Honoured Teacher of the Kyrgyz Republic and People's Teacher of the Kyrgyz Republic, both of which have privileges attached.

The school principal told all teachers in the school not to congratulate her. However, her teacher colleagues were very proud of her and congratulated her. Aigul regards herself to be a self-sufficient teacher, who can bear the pressure from her school principal. She does, however, recognise the important leadership role that the school principal should play to support novice teachers in her school and is worried about younger teachers who might be discouraged from teaching by their school leader.

*If school leaders do not assess a teacher's work properly, a teacher is less likely to have an incentive. Elder teachers have experience and are more self-sufficient, but younger and novice teachers need encouragement from school leaders when they, for instance, conduct open lessons for other teachers or organise school events.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

Aigul is a retired teacher, who still retains her integrity. She remains committed to her profession even though she feels that a teacher's work is often not appreciated by school leaders. Her husband supported her throughout her career as a teacher.

#### **Ainura and Klavdiya of Semetey School**

Ainura and Klavdiya are teachers at Semetey School, a rural primary school with predominantly Kyrgyz language of instruction located 10 km from Bishkek. It is a typical, middle-size school with 827 pupils and 48 teachers, located in a village of about 3,000 people. Klavdiya is the most senior Russian-speaking teacher among the respondents; she is formally retired but continues teaching Russian language and literature as she has done for 49 years. Ainura is a mother-tongue Kyrgyz speaker with 30 years of teaching experience, who teaches in the primary section of the school at Semetey.

#### *Ainura's story*

Ainura became a primary class teacher because her grandmother dreamt of becoming a teacher but was unable to. Her grandmother often spoke to Ainura about her friend who became a teacher. Subsequently, since her childhood

Ainura wanted to become a teacher. She took a one-year break in her teaching career in 1985 when *perestroika*<sup>3</sup> started, to work in the central archive, because at that time her teaching post was diminished. After a year, she realised that she missed teaching and came back to school. She regards her thoughts, her purpose in life and her soul to be close to the teaching profession.

Ainura's goal in teaching is to establish an equal partnership with her pupils. She wants to make sure that they feel at ease with her and are not intimidated by her. She tries to make her pupils trust her and she trusts them, and so often her pupils share their secrets with her and communicate with her without any reservation.

Ainura is respected by the school principal as a strong professional and she is frequently approached by other teachers for professional advice. She tries to pass on her knowledge that she has learnt at professional development courses on interactive methodology to younger and novice teachers. She is frequently asked to conduct open lessons for teachers, including those from other schools, to share her professional experience. She tries to be ethical and correct amidst growing tensions and divisions among teachers in her school. Ainura thinks that she is respected by teachers because she always tells the truth. Parents, whose pupils were taught by Ainura, frequently ask her to continue as class tutor for their children. She is always an honoured guest during village holidays and events. Even elder people allow her to sit in a higher position because she teaches their children.

Despite a lack of support from her husband for her teaching, she manages to keep the balance between her family and job. It is her 30<sup>th</sup> year in teaching and she has begun to develop health problems.

Ainura's teaching style and friendly attitude towards her pupils create a friendly atmosphere for their learning. Her pupils are always engaged and actively raise their hands, addressing her as *eje* without being afraid to say a wrong answer.

<sup>3</sup> A political movement for reform within the Soviet Union Communist Party during the 1980s.

### *Klavdiya's story*

Klavdiya entered the philology department at the national university and graduated with a degree in librarianship and teaching at the same time. During her practicum she liked teaching and chose to pursue a teaching career. She was assigned along with her husband to a school in 1966, where she has taught up to now. She and her husband have lived together for 50 years, and they worked in the same school until he passed away recently. She has three grown-up children and considers herself to be a happy person. Her mother was also a teacher and a school principal. Klavdiya says that teaching is her life.

Klavdiya developed an approach to teaching she calls 'sensing' a child (see also Chapter 8, pp.149-150), which she explains to be mutual understanding that develops between her and her pupils. She tries to talk to her pupils about their social problems so that she might understand what difficulties they have in learning. She is proud of the many links she has with her former pupils, many of whom remain in touch with her, even those who live abroad. Her former pupils, who live and work in the village, always greet her and give her a lift or offer a free ride. This small fact makes her really proud. At 70 years old, she teaches at school and does not think of quitting.

*I would not be able to sit at home. As long as I have strengths I have to work.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Klavdiya uses her own invented methods of teaching. For example, she invented a 'vocabulary test' which uses play to examine various aspects of language, as discussed later in Chapter 8 (pp.154-155). She also introduced a voluntary calligraphy class. She openly shares all her materials with other teachers. When they talk about Klavdiya, teachers who know her call her a teacher with incontestable professional authority. Many experienced teachers in her school come and ask her for professional advice. Through her love for poetry she keeps in touch with Russian-speaking poets and writers in Bishkek.

She regrets that the new generation of teachers do not come and ask for her help or expertise. Klavdiya feels undervalued by them. She also regards the current

generation of pupils to be uninterested in learning. She links both facts to the diminished status of education in society, which she thinks is due to the prioritisation of material values over intellectual wealth.

### **Larisa and Oleg of Kanykey School**

Larisa and Oleg are Russian speakers who teach in Kanykey School, an urban Russian language school in Bishkek. The school would be considered to be a large urban school: it has 1387 pupils and 70 teachers. Larisa is a mathematics teacher who has been teaching for 30 years. Oleg is the only male respondent in the group; he has been teaching history and civic education for 23 years.

#### ***Larisa's story***

Larisa entered the mathematics faculty in a local university and she did not aim to become a school teacher. She recalls that she always liked mathematics and that both her parents were mathematics teachers in universities. Her husband and her daughter are also mathematics teachers in a university. Hers is a maths family. When she went on practicum as part of her pre-service training, the feedback she received from the school principal, who was her mentor back then, was quite positive. She discovered she also liked teaching children. Her academic subjects at university included psychology and pedagogy. However, she did not initially plan to become a school teacher after her graduation. She wanted to become a researcher and pursue a *kandidat nauk*<sup>4</sup> in mathematics. After her graduation she was assigned to work as an engineer at a factory, and she ended up running errands. After a year of that, she decided to try to find work at the school where she did her practicum. She had liked it there, and she remembered her mentor's encouragement and that of her parents. She also thought she would like teaching because it ran in her family. It was important to her that pupils would like her subject, and it was a physics and mathematics school. She also liked the teaching staff that included some outstanding personalities, and she thought she would learn from them as a novice teacher. In

<sup>4</sup> According to the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), for purposes of international educational statistics a *Candidate of Sciences* is equivalent to a PhD.

1993, after 10 years of working in the school she liked, she decided to try to teach in university and stay on as a part-time teacher at the school. However, she discovered she could not teach both in a school and a university. She stopped teaching at the university because she thought she needed to prioritise. She also dropped her idea about pursuing her *kandidat nauk*, as she really liked teaching. In her school, she appreciated that she could teach the same pupils for 4 years and help them learn from her understanding of mathematics.

After the USSR collapsed, she came to wonder if her decision not to stay in university and pursue an academic career was wise. As a school teacher in the USSR she could afford furniture, clothes and other things; in the new context it was quite challenging. After combining school teaching with other teaching jobs, Larisa came back to school in 2000 as a full-time teacher and voluntarily committed herself to take up a position as deputy principal. She developed her managerial and communication skills and she does not regret that decision but after 4 years she decided she could only continue in school for a long time as a teacher. The extra responsibilities caused unbalance in her personal life as she spent too much time in her school when she wanted to be at home.

She has taught in the same school for 30 years and she continues to find it interesting. She is well respected by her colleagues and is considered to be one of the leading mathematics teachers in her school. Larisa is 2 years away from retirement but she does not want to retire, even though she recognises that she has much less energy than she used to have few years back.

#### ***Oleg's story***

Oleg has previously worked as a turner, a mechanic and a driver. He also studied town-planning before he decided to study part-time for a history teacher's diploma. He graduated from the history faculty at the national university and he really liked history as a subject. He started teaching in school in 1984. During the 4 years of the *perestroika* period he taught and dropped teaching several times because of the low wages that were paid at time. He would work intermittently as a driver but always felt teaching was calling him again. In 1994

he decided that he needed to stick to teaching and become a professional teacher. He appreciated communicating with children as he found them open-minded. It was not easy for him make ends meet and raise two children with a teaching job, but he continued because he had the support of his wife who later also became a teacher. His pupils would notice that he wore old clothes because he could not afford to buy new clothes.

*During the late 1990s and early 2000s among teachers we used to say that only fanatics and cynics stayed in teaching. I was questioned by my pupils, especially as a male teacher, why I did not leave the teaching profession and did not choose trading, for example, to earn a living... Once, one of my 9<sup>th</sup> graders looked at my old shoes and asked me why I could not buy new shoes. It was painful to hear my pupils offering to buy me shoes out of respect not because they were looking for a way to get good marks.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

In Oleg's opinion, he really learnt about teaching from informal training courses on innovative methods of teaching organised by the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, on debates, school parliament and conflict resolution. He considers that he did not have the constraints other former Soviet teachers have as he started teaching after *perestroika* and was 'free' of the Soviet perception of teaching. In his view, it was consequently easier for him to adopt new methods.

*The role of a teacher is to educate by words, actions, and personal example. My task as a history teacher is to arouse the interest of pupils in politics and what is happening in our society. Our pupils do not watch the news, and they are not interested in current affairs.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg thinks that the government does not prioritise education and does not care about teachers. He thinks back to the status of teachers in the USSR when they were able to afford many things and live with dignity. He thinks that it is only easier for him to be a teacher because his children have their own families and can take care of themselves. His wife and he are separated but they remain friends. What he gets paid now is enough for him to live. His own children respect him for remaining in the teaching profession. He recently decided to move to a private school after 23 years of teaching in the public school system.

### Chynara and Gulnur of Seitek School

Chynara and Gulnur, who are both mother-tongue Kyrgyz speakers, teach in a rural Kyrgyz language school 30 km away from Bishkek, called Seitek. Seitek School is a typical, small-size, rural school with 400 pupils and 30 teachers, which is located in a village with 2,500 people. Chynara is a teacher of Russian language and literature and has been teaching for 22 years, which makes her the teacher with the fewest years of teaching experience among all eight Teachers. Her senior colleague Gulnur is a retired primary class teacher with 40 years of teaching experience, who continues teaching in the primary section of Seitek School.

#### Gulnur's story

Gulnur graduated from the Kyrgyz Pedagogical University as a teacher of chemistry and biology teacher in 1975. Gulnur decided to become a teacher because she was impressed by her chemistry teacher in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, who served as a role model for her and made her think highly of the teaching profession. Gulnur's parents also encouraged her to become a teacher. She was the eldest child in the family and had many siblings.

After her university graduation, Gulnur was assigned to a school in a provincial capital. The teaching staff were experienced and well respected; her chemistry classroom had the best equipment that Gulnur had ever seen; and five of the teachers she worked with had received the *El Agartuu Otlichnigi* title. Gulnur later moved to a rural area because her husband, who was also a teacher, was assigned to a different location. Her new school was not as well-equipped as her previous school; however, she tried to create the same conditions in her classroom that she enjoyed in her first school. She worked hard to make that rural school one of the best in terms of teaching and visual learning aids. The environment at her first school established the high standards Gulnur has tried to emulate throughout her teaching career, in each of the schools she worked in when her husband was assigned to a different location.



Gulnur has been at Seitek School since 1982. She and her husband built a house there on the piece of land that was allocated to them. During the time when many teachers left teaching to sell and trade, Gulnur stayed on because she thought that teaching was all she was able to do.

Each of her six children, who are all married and have their own families, studied at Seitek School. Gulnur tells her own children that they have to choose a profession where their hearts are. Her youngest son is studying mathematics and wants to be a researcher; he does not exclude teaching mathematics in school. Two of her daughters are studying for a primary class teacher diploma and want to be like their mother. Gulnur also received the *El Agartuu Otlichnigi* title. Gulnur is in her 40<sup>th</sup> year of teaching; she is officially retired and her children want her to stay at home. She continues to teach because she likes the school and believes she is among other good teachers.

#### *Chynara's story*

Chynara's mother was a mathematics teacher but she did not want her daughter to become a teacher, unlike the parents of the other respondents who were all encouraging about teaching. Chynara applied to study economics and to the Russian language and literature department. She soon she realised that she did not have enough points to enter the economics course, but she was easily accepted at the Russian language department. Her motivation for becoming a teacher came from the impact her school literature teachers had on her, despite the fact that she was good at mathematics and her parents wanted her to study economics. When her school practicum started, she realised that she liked teaching and her choice was confirmed. After graduation she wanted to continue with her *kandidat nauk* but her father told her that she would be better off if she got married. She got married and joined her husband in a rural area where she started her teaching career. Chynara has four children of her own to raise and she spends time at home housekeeping, which includes cooking food and looking after two cows and their calves. Usually, she spends 1-2 hours at home preparing lessons. She was awarded 'best teacher in the district' in 2001.

*My pupil is my comrade from whom I can learn many things. Now I look at my relationships with pupils as collaboration. In the beginning of my 19-year experience it seemed to me that we did not understand each other. I thought a lot about how pupils look at a teacher and I still try to find my solution. If I do not know an answer to their question, I openly tell them I do not know the answer and maybe they will help me to find the answer. Earlier they giggled at me not knowing an answer, but now they are totally with me.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Some pupils are unable to afford textbooks or workbooks but Chynara understands their social status; when she has money she purchases what they need. She tries to connect Russian literature to the lives of her Kyrgyz-speaking pupils and to build discussions around moral values. Her methods are interactive and she tries to involve all pupils.

Chynara is a class tutor and sees herself as a 'second mother'. Her pupils were the only pupils, at all my lesson observations in each of the four schools, who approached me to quiz me. In return, I asked them about Chynara. They told me that she is different from other teachers and is friendly.

*She is very 'warm-hearted' to us. She is mother, psychologist and teacher to us. She explains things to us and is very tolerant. She gives us valuable advice.*

(Chynara's Pupils, Seitek School)

Chynara is constantly seeking to understand the lives of her pupils and ways to improve her teaching. She spends a lot of extra time with her pupils going to the mountains or museums in town. Now, finally, after 23 years of teaching and family commitments, she has decided to pursue her dream to study for a *kandidat nauk* so that she can learn about developmental psychology. She has started a part-time psychology course, which she hopes will help her to understand her pupils better. She and her husband agreed that, in order for her to find time to pursue her studies, they would need to get rid of the cattle. Chynara recently moved to work in a semi-private, urban school for orphans. Her two daughters study at the same school.

The profiles of the eight respondents meet the criteria for selecting EEE Teachers that I set in Chapter 5 (pp.77-78). They have positive relationships with other teachers, demonstrate professional expertise, share their knowledge with other teachers, and do not hold administrative posts in their schools at the time of the study. All eight respondents participated in training on innovative methodology and have more than 20 years of teaching experience.

In the following three Chapters 7, 8, and 9, I discuss the findings in relation to my three research questions. In Chapter 7, I discuss the professional commitment of EEE Teachers. In Chapter 8, I discuss the professional practice of EEE Teachers. In Chapter 9, I discuss the professional interactions of EEE Teachers. Chapter 10 draws together the conclusions in relation to the three aspects of professionalism of EEE Teachers and discusses their implications for further research and teacher policy in Kyrgyzstan.

## Chapter 7: EEE Teachers' continuing commitment to teaching

This chapter explores the findings in relation to the factors that contribute to the continuing commitment of EEE Teachers in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. The findings thus build on and develop individual insights provided by the eight EEE Teachers into the main concepts of teacher commitment in my study – self-efficacy, resilience, moral purpose and *prizvanie* from the Soviet and post-Soviet literature. The findings describe an arc that spans the development of the careers of the eight EEE Teachers: (1) what first inspires them to become teachers, (2) how the achievements of their pupils build experience and lead to job satisfaction, and (3) how they are able to sustain a commitment to teaching through adversity over a long period. The main concepts in the literature emerge with these career stages but are not confined to them; they overlap, interconnect and reinforce themselves throughout their teaching careers. The findings reflect the lived experiences of each of the eight EEE Teachers as well as the specific historic and cultural context of Kyrgyzstan, offering a unique perspective on the making of EEE Teachers and what builds and sustains their continuing commitment to teaching.

### Making the choice for teaching and self-efficacy

Several important factors in the personal and professional lives of the EEE Teachers led them to think seriously about, and make their initial commitments to teaching. In this section, I identify and discuss the factors that contributed to the decisions of each of the eight EEE Teachers to follow teaching as a profession.

The first factor that contributes to the continuing commitment of the EEE Teachers reflects Bandura's notion of *vicarious experiences* (1997), which I mention in Chapter 2 (p.21). The EEE Teachers were inspired variously by their own school teachers, their parents who may have been teachers, or other relatives to believe that it was desirable and feasible for them to become teachers.



The EEE Teachers show how their teachers, in turn, served as role models for them, demonstrating exemplary behaviour and helping them to think about their purpose in life. They learnt attitudes and teaching methods from their teachers and use them in their own practice. Below, Marina, the Russian-speaking teacher from Manas School, remembers her primary class teacher who treated her with respect. In my observations of Marina's teaching, she demonstrated that she never raised her voice at pupils. She aspires to match the example set by her primary class teacher.

*I liked the way my primary class teacher had of communicating with children - she never shouted or raised her voice at anyone. I liked to copy her. Later, looking back at her, I wanted to give my pupils exactly what she gave me many years ago.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Gulnur, a Kyrgyz-speaking teacher from a rural school outside Bishkek and Larisa, a Russian-speaking teacher from Kanykey School in Bishkek, were influenced by subject teachers later in their secondary schools.

*When I studied in school there was a chemistry teacher. I liked very much the way she talked, walked and her behaviour. It seems to me that I chose teaching as a profession in my 7<sup>th</sup> grade through looking at and admiring her. The teaching profession seemed sublime to me.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

*I learnt a lot from my teachers. It seems to me that I try to behave like my school physics teacher. When I joined the school I felt that I wanted to teach and behave like her, in a clear, sequential, calm way and to combine various types of activities. I remembered how she taught, I learnt a lot from her.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Ainura, who was educated in rural schools, and who teaches in one now, relates how medicine and education were regarded as equally respectable careers. She was also inspired by the example of her teachers in choosing teaching as her career.

*Back in the 1980s we looked at teachers and wanted to become teachers. The majority of pupils wanted either to become teachers or doctors. I think we did not know any other professions.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

The choice to become a teacher was also influenced by relatives and parents. Aigul had parents who were teachers; they provided a *proforientaciya*<sup>5</sup> (professional orientation) towards the teaching profession. The guidance provided by Aigul's father, as shown below, reflects the humane side of the teaching profession. This distinguished the teaching profession from other professions for her and helped her to develop a meaningful purpose in the teaching profession. This influence, as it was for Ainura above, was reinforced by another: the notion that the teaching profession was a respectable one, which enabled parents of teachers to talk about teaching with pride. The earlier popularity of teaching as a profession in Kyrgyzstan is mentioned by several EEE Teachers.

*My parents were teachers and they told me that this profession was quite good. Also, the teaching profession was quite respected at that time... My father used to say that teaching is not just a profession; it is all about the tarbiya [upbringing] of and providing knowledge to a human being.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

Klavdiya and Larisa were drawn to the profession of teaching through the personal example of their family members.

*My mother was a mathematics teacher. She was a teacher from God, a school principal and a decent human being. School was her life.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

*All of my close relatives are mathematics teachers in universities. I think I have a genetic predisposition for teaching.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

<sup>5</sup> *Proforientaciya* – a series of events for graduate pupils to provide information on different professions in order to guide them about potential career development and the labour market.

Ainura was strongly encouraged to become a teacher by her grandmother, who saw teaching as a missed life opportunity for herself and ended up working as a farm labourer after she was kidnapped and forced into marriage.

*I think it was the strong influence of my grandmother. My grandmother was a kidnapped bride and could not become a teacher. She used to tell me from my early years that she regretted her decision not to continue to study as a primary class teacher. She insisted that I become a primary class teacher despite everything. I think her words influenced my career choice. In my childhood I used to say that I would become a teacher and I did not think about other professions.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

A second factor that contributes to the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment in Kyrgyzstan is *early affirmation* in their roles as teachers; it combines Bandura's (1997) notions of *mastery experiences, social persuasion* and *emotional and physiological states*, which I discuss earlier in Chapter 2 (pp.21-22) and appears to consolidate foundational self-efficacy beliefs. For the EEE Teachers, positive experiences during their pre-service teacher education at universities, which included courses such as pedagogy and psychology and a practicum<sup>6</sup>, were important in building an early commitment to teaching. Exposure to the practicum provided their first taste of teaching and contact with pupils. The first teaching experience appears to emerge as a crucial factor in the formation of professional identity, confirming that they could and should teach. As shown below, both Klavdiya, the formally retired Russian language and literature teacher, and Chynara, who is Kyrgyz-speaking and teaches in one of the rural schools, received positive feedback from their practicum supervisors and teachers, supporting their hopes and early beliefs that they would be able to teach children.

*I was doing my practicum and conducted lessons for the first time. I received positive feedback from my supervisor. At that time I realised that I could work with a class of children. I had a choice to work either as a librarian or a teacher. I decided to choose teaching in school.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

<sup>6</sup> The practicum is part of the curriculum for students in both pedagogy faculties and in faculties such as mathematics and history.

*I liked the practicum at university which started in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year and lasted through to the 5<sup>th</sup> year of my studies. I practised as a teacher for one or two months per year. It was important to get feedback from real teachers and they all provided positive feedback about my teaching. As a result, I thought that I could do it and I believed in myself.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

The practicum also influenced Larisa positively: she did not initially plan to become a teacher after she left her job at a factory.

*I did not intend to become a teacher at a mathematics faculty in my university years. I wanted to be a researcher in mathematics. During my practicum at my former school I felt that I liked teaching. Perhaps because my parents were teachers, I had a gut feeling that I liked teaching.*

(Larisa, Semetey School)

Marina combined her part-time studies with working in school. Her part-time teaching in school allowed her to find herself professionally.

*At the age of 17 when I was a part-time student at the Russian language and literature faculty at university, I was proposed to work as a pioneer leader<sup>7</sup> in a rural school for children with special needs. I worked for one year and I liked it... I found myself.*

(Marina, Manas School)

A positive experience during induction for novice teachers appears to play a significant role in shaping their commitment at the beginning of a career. From the narratives of the EEE Teachers it appears that the professional guidance and psychological support provided by more experienced colleagues early on in their careers provided early affirmation that was important for building longer-term commitment to teaching and the development of professional identity. The formation of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1989, 1997) at the start of a career, through the feedback received from colleagues and others, facilitates the perceptions of progress performance and self-confidence, building job satisfaction. Examples below show how important it was for certain EEE Teachers to get professional support from their experienced colleagues.

<sup>7</sup> Pioneer leader – a leader of the Pioneer organisation in a school, who fulfilled the tasks of communist upbringing.

*A school principal helped me a lot. I also had a teacher who is retired now. I used to share a classroom with her and I came earlier to observe her classes. She taught me how to conduct lessons. I discussed her lessons with her.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Larisa's experience was unique because she had mixed support. As a novice teacher she wanted to look at samples of lesson plans and was surprised that some teachers were not willing to share them with her, thinking that she would copy them for her classes. She learnt from this experience and shares everything with novice teachers if they approach her. Her school principal mentored her in all aspects of teaching by attending her classes and providing feedback on the spot. In class tutoring, in which Larisa did not have experience, she received ongoing support from her school principal.

*I had one class, where pupils were unruly and behaved badly. I did not complain and did not call for help but somehow the school principal learnt about it and talked to them directly. He helped me a lot when I was an inexperienced novice teacher in every aspect – how to teach, what to do during teaching, how to tutor a class. He taught me many things.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Recalling Bandura's (1997) idea of *vicarious experiences*, which I discuss in Chapter 2 (p.21, p.26), Gulnur and Larisa learnt from several experienced colleagues in their schools, which helped them to shape their style of teaching. Larisa learnt from every teacher's positive and negative experiences. Gulnur was influenced by the presence of strong teachers around her when she first started teaching.

*I joined a school with strong teachers, whose pupils were winners of Olympiads. Five of six teachers had the El Agartuu Otlichnigi title. I was teaching in an environment with good classroom conditions and strong teachers. I joined that teaching staff and started to teach like them. The environment of the first school of a teacher influences a teacher enormously.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

*I learnt a lot from my colleagues even though I considered myself self-sufficient. I gained something interesting from every teacher whose class I attended - both positive and negative examples of teaching. That was how I formed my style of teaching.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Teachers like Larisa and Marina learnt from their past experiences as novice teachers, emerging with the conviction that other novice teachers should be helped professionally. Like other EEE Teachers, Marina had a mentor who helped her not to get lost when she was a novice teacher. She appreciated the help and direction that were provided by her mentor. In the example below, Marina helped a novice teacher in her school, even though she was not an assigned mentor to that teacher (for further discussion see Chapter 9, pp.192-194).

*Lately, I saw a novice teacher crying in a corridor and I asked her what happened. She told me that no-one helped her to learn and she was going to quit. I talked to her and taught her few things. She comes to me for advice on a regular basis. She shares her success stories with me now.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Thus, two key factors appear to be involved in affecting the initial choice of teaching as a career and cementing it as a career path; *vicarious experiences*, which are discussed in Chapter 2 (p.21 and p.26), and *early affirmation* appear to work together to reinforce foundational self-efficacy beliefs, which are discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.21-22). These are both largely individual and psychological but the experience of the EEE Teachers also illustrates important relational and social aspects, which point to their social construction. These foundational self-efficacy beliefs snowball, in a sense, as the careers of the EEE Teachers develop, gathering with them a fuller sense of purpose and idea of personal vocation.

### **Committing to the vocation and the growth of moral purpose**

This section demonstrates how the important ideas of committing to the vocation and the growth of moral purpose, which are discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.28-31),

have their roots in the love and concern the EEE Teachers develop for their pupils. The EEE Teachers are highly valued by their colleagues for being ethical, professional and committed. In the four focus group discussions with the colleagues of the EEE Teachers and observations of all-school teachers' meetings, teachers were asked about the characteristics of Teachers with a capital 'T'. Their colleagues described EEE Teachers as teachers with moral values, with firm professional principles and outstanding work discipline; they considered them principled, responsible, tactful, exacting, pedantic, treating children with love, just, doing only good for children, and true professionals.

The third factor I identify that contributes to the EEE Teachers' continuous commitment in Kyrgyzstan is *lubov k detyam* (love for children), which is described extensively in the Soviet and post-Soviet literature (Sukhomlinsky, 1981; Soloveichik, 2000; Gazman, 1995; Tubelsky, 2012; Amonashvili, 2013) and discussed in Chapter 2 (p.30) of this thesis. In examples below, Marina and Klavdiya show how this starts to grow through sharing knowledge in their interaction with children.

*My first teacher, my father and my mentor taught me to transfer what I learnt to people. My wish to become a teacher did not come overnight. I came to it gradually, step by step. These steps turned into the ladder of my life values.*

(Marina, Manas School)

*My main goal is to share my knowledge with pupils by finding new methods of teaching. I am trying to be of use to other people.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

In each of the focus group discussions in the four schools, when teachers were asked about the reasons for remaining in school and their commitment to the teaching profession, teachers mentioned that they feel obliged to teach their pupils everything they know.

It is apparent, for example, from my observations of the EEE Teachers' teaching that they are interested in teaching their pupils moral values. For example, Ainura discusses the fairy tale about *bulbul* (a nightingale) and *bai* (a rich

person)<sup>8</sup> with her 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in an ethics lesson. The tale raises moral and ethical values for pupils and she wants them to reflect and learn about these values. In relating the tale, she employs a playful and slightly childish intonation that seems to suggest she has never heard the fairy tale before herself and she wants to learn what the story is about from her pupils, by asking them to explain who the main characters are and what the fairy tale means to them. Pupils are intrigued by these questions and reply to Ainura with a generous raising of hands. As the pupils respond to her about why the captive nightingale does not sing for the greedy rich person, she emphasises the answers of her pupils and engages the rest of the class in the discussion by encouraging them to express their own opinions. She provides no judgment of their responses. Her pupils create their own arguments about the moral that the fairy tale brings to them.

Gulnur and Ainura treat their pupils much as they would their own children in the way they feel responsible for leading them through primary school and are genuinely worried about their well-being, learning achievements and graduation. This suggests that *lubov k detyam* (love for children) (Sukhomlinsky, 1981), which is discussed in Chapter 2 (p.30), is still relevant, at least for the EEE Teachers, in the context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, as illustrated by the comments quoted below.

*How will I drop my 1<sup>st</sup> graders and retire? I feel I need to lead them through to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to graduate and then I would probably really retire. I cannot let them down.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

*My pupils are like my own children. When my own children were in primary school they felt jealous because I paid more attention to my pupils. I treat them as my own children.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

In my observation of an all-school teachers' meeting in Manas School, Marina is asked spontaneously by the school principal to present her ideas about the role

<sup>8</sup> The fairy tale is about a rich person who catches a singing nightingale and keeps it in captivity to make the bird sing for him. But the captive nightingale does not sing in a cage.

of a teacher in the upbringing of pupils. Marina emphasises in her response that teachers set the tone for exemplary behaviour among pupils, raising the importance of addressing declining moral and ethical principles among teachers in the school and increasing incidents of rudeness to children. She stresses that she understands that teachers have hard lives and bear various burdens that make teachers lose control. She emphasises that teachers are responsible for children and that is why teachers should neither think badly about pupils nor say bad things about pupils. She raises the importance for all teachers of being polite and ethical, and then she concludes: 'No matter how difficult it is for a teacher, we came here to love, to teach and to respect.'

In all focus group discussions in the four schools, older teachers mentioned the fear about 'dropping their pupils' as they feel responsible for their future learning and upbringing. These remarks echo the love and concern the EEE Teachers talk about and demonstrate.

*Lubov k detyam* (love for children), which I described as an attribute of *prizvanie* in Chapter 2 (p.30), is closely associated with the fourth factor I identify that contributes to Teachers' continuing commitment in Kyrgyzstan: the idea of *prizvanie* (a sense of vocation), which was such an important concept in the Soviet period (Sukhomlinsky, 1981). As shown below, Ainura shows strong commitment to the teaching profession that is built on 'love for children'.

*I never had a thought to leave the teaching profession, except the moments when I had serious health issues. When I got ill I thought I had to stop teaching and sit at home but I could not bear that idea. I thought about my class and children and came back to teach.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

*Prizvanie*, which I described in Chapter 2 (pp.29-30), provides an important reason why the EEE Teachers remained in the profession during difficult times in their lives during the 1990s and 2000. While a number of their colleagues related in the focus group discussions that they had no alternative to teaching and they therefore devoted their lives to it, Gulnur's and Oleg's narratives below

reveal that the EEE Teachers continued their commitment to the profession despite the low wages and the temptations to join other professions.

*[After the USSR collapsed] I could not imagine myself in any other profession except teaching. Many teachers left for the trade, but I did not have an ability to sell. Where am I going to go? The main thing is to love your profession.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

*I thought of changing schools, but I never thought of leaving the teaching profession. Of course, I thought sometimes in difficult times that I would need to leave the teaching profession because I had to feed my children. At the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000 the wage of teachers was too little. I had two children and I had to think how to feed them. I did not have the thought of not wanting to work in school, but the need to earn money for my family pushed me to think about it. Indeed, teachers worked for the idea, not for money.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

In relation to the low wages teachers receive, Klavdiya suggests that teachers with *prizvanie* commit themselves to working for children despite the low wages; this suggests that her notion of *prizvanie* accepts that sacrifices have to be made to remain committed to teaching.

These narratives show that the degree of commitment to teaching becomes greater when this commitment is the result of a deliberate decision, and having made their earlier commitment to the profession the EEE Teachers are resolved to follow their vocation.

However, *prizvanie* that the EEE Teachers have for their own work is accompanied by strong objections to what they regard as unethical behaviour by other teachers. They highlight, for example, receiving expensive gifts from pupils and parents, being late for their lessons or not conducting a lesson. They feel strongly that unethical behaviour undermines and threatens the moral principles and values of their profession, as well as work discipline among teachers, which reflects the importance of 'a code of professional conduct' (MacBeath, 2012), as a professionalism criterion discussed in Chapter 3 (p.40).

Marina and Larisa position themselves as the guardians of these moral principles in their profession. This is illustrated in the examples below.

*I think the teaching profession was a predetermination for me. I think it was prizvanie for me, which is not the case for many people I see in our school, who are strangers to this profession. They come because it is warm here and they can shout at children. There are only few real teachers in our school...Teachers in our school do not follow labour discipline. They do not conduct their lessons but chat with each other in the canteen. Some conduct lessons properly because of inspection, not because of the children they are supposed to teach like this regularly.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Marina points to *prizvanie*, or the values she associates with this notion, as the quality that makes the distinction between committed teachers and those who are 'strangers to the profession'. Larisa raises an important issue of unethical behaviour of some teachers and their negative influence on educating pupils, by considering prioritisation of material values and bribing their teachers.

*There are teachers who bring up pupils in a negative way, e.g. they speak in their lessons to children about making money as a priority in their lives and that all teachers take bribes. As a professional, I was offended when I heard that.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Marina explains how unethical behaviour among her colleagues negatively influences pupils in her school.

*One teacher tries his best to communicate with pupils properly and with respect towards them. The other teachers swear and call pupils names - creatures, monsters, etc. I understand our pupils. With such an opposite treatment pupils get confused easily.*

(Marina, Manas School)

These strong statements from Marina and Larisa about what they consider to be increasing unethical behaviour among teachers reveal their worries about the future of their profession and importance of professional ethics for their professionalism. This was confirmed in the all-school teachers' meeting I observed in Manas School, where Marina was asked about her professional opinion on upbringing and education.

A fifth factor contributing to the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment in Kyrgyzstan is the meaning and fulfilment teaching provides in Teachers' lives. This is common to all EEE Teachers. It reflects the 'harmony between heart and mind' that Sukhomlinsky (1984) suggests is an attribute of *prizvanie*, which is discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.29-30). Even towards the end of their careers, despite the weariness we might expect after so many years of teaching, the EEE Teachers still find strength to talk positively about teaching, as demonstrated by Larisa below.

*There was no point in my life when I wanted to drop teaching in school. Now that I am closer to my retirement I think about combining retirement and continuing teaching as 50/50 but I do not want to give up teaching. I can think of the tiredness that I accumulated for all these years - getting up at 5am every morning and checking pupils' workbooks at nights are not easy. But I always liked teaching.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

The positive attitude of the EEE Teachers to their commitment to teaching at various stages of their lives does not have a simple explanation: there is no single answer in defining a source of positive thinking. The positive attitude also reflects the role of *positive emotions* in being resilient (Hargreaves, 1998; Fredrickson, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007), which I discuss in Chapter 2 (pp.22-23). However, the eight Teachers express their positive thinking because they have a clear meaning in their lives, which is guided by *prizvanie*, moral purpose and professional fulfilment. The example below of Klavdiya shows that after her 49 years of teaching, her work with pupils still brings her joy and makes her life meaningful.

*I am a happy person because of my profession. When I see pupils in a classroom I forget about everything. I forget about problems, adversity and my diseases.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Larisa's positive emotions about her teaching experience and being in a classroom have made her dedicated throughout her career.



*I like everything in teaching from my pedagogy practice at university: to prepare for classes, to study materials and think about them. I like to conduct lessons, I like it when pupils listen to you and ask questions, and when I see that I bring some good for them.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Also, in the focus group discussions in the four schools, teachers mentioned the importance of their emotional and intellectual attachment to the pupils and the energy that they gain when they see their pupils are learning from them, which also confirms that *prizvanie* is present in the four schools.

The sixth factor I identify that contributes to the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment in Kyrgyzstan is a strong moral obligation to pupils. This is particularly demonstrated by the four senior EEE Teachers, Aigul, Gulnur and Klavdiya, who are retired but still teach, and Marina, who is in her pre-retirement age. This moral obligation is reminiscent of the *prosvetitelskaya missiya* (the sense of moral mission) in the USSR (Rebrova & Chashchukhin, 2013) that I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.35-36), which was to educate 'ideologically' in order to raise loyal citizens. Their moral obligation to their pupils is so strong it makes it very difficult for them to contemplate quitting teaching and enjoying retirement. They consider that they have a mission to complete and still have a lot to offer to their pupils.

This *prosvetitelskaya missiya*, that the four senior EEE Teachers still associate themselves with, is in some ways a remnant from the Soviet period; however, it has become very much part of their current professional identity. It appears to be wrapped up in their notions of *prizvanie* and lacks the ideological underpinnings of the 'enlightening' mission of the Soviet *prosvetitel*. The four senior EEE Teachers have managed to preserve this element of their identity in a different political context; repurposed in a sense as a resource for resilience and a confirmation of purpose during difficult times. This provides insights into why the four senior EEE Teachers are committed to the profession at the latest stages of their careers.

Gulnur of Seitek School, whose teaching experience spans 40 years, is retired. If she had grandchildren she would happily stay at home and look after them. She nevertheless feels obliged to get her current 1<sup>st</sup> graders through primary school. Klavdiya, similarly, feels her mission is incomplete.

*I retired 15 years ago. Some say people like me should sit at home. I would not be able to sit at home. I must work as long as I have strengths... I never cheat in my work. My main goal is to share my knowledge with pupils by finding new methods of teaching. I am trying to be of use to other people.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Thus, the shaping of *prizvanie* and moral purpose, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 28-31), appear at the starting point of teacher commitment, establishing the principles and ethical behaviour for sustaining professional commitment throughout teachers' careers. *Prizvanie* provides meaning for the EEE Teachers' moral commitment, and, more importantly, provides a foundation for the resilience that is required in adverse working conditions.

### **Resilience and teacher commitment**

In this section I discuss the various factors that influence the decisions of the EEE Teachers to remain in the teaching profession through times of adversity. These factors make them stronger and more positive about their work, they include: feedback by community members and parents about performance; the support of family members and in-school support, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.26-28), provided by school colleagues; and professional expertise that leads to their resilience and respect in school. I also discuss two factors that contribute to creating a supportive environment for the EEE Teachers in their schools: support from school leaders and professional links and collaboration with colleagues, both of which are crucial for strengthening resilience, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.26-28), in increasingly bureaucratic settings, in coping with the diminished status of the teaching profession, and responding to wider policy reforms. These factors point to the significant social construction of resilience; this section shows how this builds on self-efficacy beliefs, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.21-

22), and ideas about *prizvanie* that become so internalised over the course of a career.

A seventh factor that contributes to the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment in Kyrgyzstan is the importance of social ties between the EEE Teachers and other teachers and with their pupils. My earlier discussion in Chapter 2 (pp.26-27) explains how social ties with colleagues strengthen resilience (Day & Gu, 2010). For example, Marina remarks that the presence of her elder colleagues, with whom she had worked for years, caused her stay in school. She shares her thoughts and ideas with them and she feels support from them, recalling the idea of *situated resilience factors* (Gu & Day, 2007, 2013) discussed in Chapter 2 (p.25). More importantly, the fact that teachers need to rely on each other to survive refers to earlier discussion on *relational resilience* (Day & Gu, 2010) in Chapter 2 (p.27). Larisa talks about teachers in her school with whom she communicates on an everyday basis. These social relationships provide a platform for sharing professional and personal issues, expressing confusion and doubt, and enhancing resilience. Some senior EEE Teachers also feel vulnerable, as shown in case of Marina below, who is due to reach retirement age a year after our interview.

*Sometimes I am so tired and I feel like I have no strength left. But I have to work because I am a class tutor for my 7<sup>th</sup> graders and they have 2 more years to go. I cannot drop them right now because who would help them? Of course, I also need to think how to earn money for myself. I would not be frank with you, if I say that I work only because I like teaching.*

(Marina, Manas School)

These professional relationships, which Gu and Day (2007) describe as a *situated resilience factor* in Chapter 2 (pp.25-26), provide an important impetus for staying committed to teaching. For most of the EEE Teachers, teaching is not only about teaching lessons. Teachers in the focus group at Kanykey School and Marina of Manas School emphasise that they communicate with teachers on different issues on an everyday basis, which helps them to survive. Teachers need a space to gather and talk, as Larisa emphasises below. In her school,

however, teachers lack the professional physical space to gather to communicate and express their confusions and problems.

*When you communicate with other people from your school, and talk about things I think it is very important... We have kept discussing in our school for 10 years that we need a room for emotional relief, where teachers may relax and talk to each other. Teachers rarely communicate with each other these days. After their lessons finish all teachers run home.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Maintaining professional links with their colleagues and getting support from their colleagues is what matters to the EEE Teachers. The EEE Teachers recognise that there is not enough collaboration between teachers. In an example below, Klavdiya recognises that teachers in her school talk less about professional issues and collaborative work.

*Every teacher in our school works on her own. I do not see productive mutual professional exchange among teaching staff. We rarely share our professional ideas. We mostly talk about the academic standing of pupils at our pedagogical gatherings.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

The eighth factor I identify that contributes to the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment to the teaching profession involves recognition of their work by parents and community members. This boosts their self-efficacy belief that they can make a difference in their pupils' lives and is reminiscent of Bandura's (1997) idea of *social persuasion* (Bandura, 1997; Tait, 2008) (see Chapter 2, pp.21-22) and *situated resilience factors* (see Chapter 2, pp.25-26), in the sense that it relates to their school lives (Gu & Day, 2007). In the examples of Klavdiya and Ainura it can be seen that parents trust the EEE Teachers with the upbringing of their children.

*Parents support me as a teacher. If I recruit a class as a class tutor they try to bring their child only to my class. Psychologically, it is a very big support for me.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

*Parents frequently come up to me and ask me to be a class tutor for their children as much as I can. Once I was a class tutor for a class that was*



*with me from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and they showed very good results in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I guess parents see the difference between teachers. They also compare learning outcomes of their children who are taught by different teachers. My pupils are disciplined and study voluntarily. Pupils tell their parents that they do not want to miss my classes when it is cold and they do not want to get 'D' marks. I think it is because I never shout at my pupils and I talk to them. Maybe because of that parents see the difference in my teaching.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

The EEE Teachers also view reflections of their success in the social recognition of their work by community members, especially in rural and suburban areas where community members know six of the EEE Teachers personally. The work of these teachers is appreciated by local community members, and this recognition makes them proud of being teacher. They feel respected despite the social status of a teacher nationwide remaining low. As shown below, Ainura is highly respected in her village for being a teacher; she is always honoured at village events.

*Villagers always greet me and say 'look there is Ainura-eje'. They allocate an honourable seat for me during different village events. I think it is because I am a teacher and my community recognises it. This is when I am proud of being a teacher. People who are older than me allow me to sit above them, while I am supposed to sit and serve them as 'kelin'<sup>9</sup>. I tell them that I am younger than them but they insist. So, I thank them for it.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Social recognition by community members makes Marina a happy, positively emotional and fulfilled professional, as shown below. This reflects the importance of Bandura's (1997) idea of *emotional state*, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.21-22), and its effects on self-efficacy belief. In her narrative, Marina also says that she has never had expensive things in her life but she has been always recognised by community members for her teaching; this enhances her confidence and resilience when she feels dejected.

*Many people remember that I taught their children. That is why I am an absolutely happy person. When I walk in the streets of our village*

<sup>9</sup> *Kelin* is a way of addressing a younger woman within a community or a family, who marries a native villager.

*everybody greets me and knows me because they respect me because I am a teacher. Inside I feel very emotional and proud. My achievement is people's recognition.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Klavdiya gets support from community members during difficult times, many of whom are her former pupils.

*Many of my pupils supported me when my husband, who was also their former teacher, got sick. They sent support from Germany and Switzerland. My former pupils greet me in the village and I teach their children and grandchildren. I am very well respected in the village.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

A ninth factor that contributes to the EEE Teachers remaining committed to the teaching profession is the ongoing support provided by family members throughout their entire careers, especially during difficult times; what Gu and Day (2007) refer to as the *personal resilience factor*, discussed in Chapter 2 (p.25). From their narratives, it appears that this is an essential factor for the EEE Teachers. The EEE Teachers obviously enjoy different degrees of support from their spouses and children but each of them emphasised the importance of family support throughout their careers. Some enjoy support from their spouses who are also teachers and who understand the issues they are facing, find work to contribute to the family incomes or take on additional housekeeping chores. In the example below, Larisa's husband provides both financial and professional help.

*All my life I have done what I like - teaching - thanks to my family. If I did not have my husband [a university teacher] next to me, I simply would not survive with my current wage... I cook rarely at home. My husband is undemanding and eats precooked dumplings. My husband partially supports my teaching and partially disapproves of it. He supports it because he is a university teacher and he helps me to solve mathematical tasks if they are difficult for me. But I hear criticism from him about me constantly checking pupils' workbooks. He is fed up with it; clearly, he would rather see me doing laundry or something of housekeeping than checking workbooks.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

In the next example, Chynara talks about the importance of sharing her thoughts about work after working hours. Her children, and her husband who is a former teacher, listen at home to her stories about her professional life.

*Support for me starts in the family, at home. When they all support me I am very glad. My children and husband tell me that they understand me and teaching is an interesting part of my life. They tell me they are interested in my stories about my teaching.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Oleg appreciates the support of his wife, who was supportive even when he was earning very little money through teaching. This was hard for Oleg who has traditionalist views about the responsibilities of men within the family. His wife shared his burden as household breadwinner, which allowed Oleg to remain committed to teaching.

*I thank my former wife enormously, who worked equally with me at the time of need, that she did not reproach me for not earning enough money. There was a mutual understanding between us. Later, she became a teacher too and that is why we did not have accusations towards each other and we somehow managed to earn enough money for our family. Our children used to say that I and my wife used to talk about school only. It is a professional disease. My own children respect me because I remained a teacher.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

When Marina's husband was alive he helped her a lot with their children when they were young. This allowed Marina to spend more time in school. Now that Marina's children have grown up and have their own families, her professional life is easier.

*My husband also supported me in everything. He helped me with housekeeping and taking care of our children.*

(Marina, Manas School)

For the three female EEE Teachers who work in rural settings, it is a constant challenge to keep a harmonious balance between teaching and the domestic duties of traditional Kyrgyz households, in which women typically are responsible for housekeeping and looking after the cattle. These three EEE Teachers do not find it easy to sustain their housekeeping responsibilities and

their teaching, and doing so has a cost for both their energy and their health. Both Chynara and Ainura have health problems: Ainura often gets sick and has been missing classes recently, and Chynara is recovering from surgery. Nevertheless, both of them demonstrate enormous resilience. In contrast to Chynara, Ainura receives little support for her teaching from her husband. This was quite challenging for her when their children were little, although her daughter is supportive now that she is grown up.

*My husband is against my working in school because he does not have a higher education and works as a driver. When the food is not ready and he is alone at home he is not happy. My daughter helps to prepare food for my husband. My children help me and understand me. We found a common language when our children grew up. But before, when the children were young, I worked only one shift and came back home earlier.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Family circumstances are more conducive for Chynara than Ainura. However she still needs to find a balance between her work and pursuit of a degree on the one hand, and housekeeping on the other. Her husband, a former teacher, continues to support her teaching.

*I entered a master's programme and my husband told me that I would not manage my studies and housekeeping, and looking after the cattle. I told him that I had come to what I wanted after 20 years and I was not going to quit. Now we have got rid of our cattle in order for me to continue my studies and to work as a teacher. Before, I used to bring pupils' workbooks to check at home overnight. Now I manage to check them at school. I try to be with my children at home and do some housework. In the evenings I sit at my computer and do my studies. My husband supports my teaching because he was a teacher for 2 years but then he left school...He often suggests that I should go to a bookshop where I may spend hours going through books and he buys me a book if I like it.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Gulnur, a senior rural teacher, still finds herself doing more housekeeping work than her husband, who is a university teacher. However, she manages to allocate time for her professional work at home.

*When I get tired my husband tells me that I should quit and why do I need teaching. He teaches in university and so he comes back home after work and that is it. I come back from work, do some housekeeping, cook the food, and check pupils' workbooks. My husband gets irritated and tells me that my vision is not good for checking workbooks.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

The tenth factor I identify that contributes to the continuing commitment and resilience of the EEE Teachers is their teaching expertise, which is reflected in their opinions about matters of pedagogy, reflecting Bandura's ideas about *self-efficacy belief* and *social persuasion* (1997) and the *professional resilience factor* (Gu & Day, 2007), discussed earlier in Chapter 2 (pp.21-22 and pp.25-26). It is this expertise into which they must delve deeply for critical decisions about their practice when faced with the top-down reforms that are imposed on them. The professional judgement of the EEE Teachers is built on their understanding of their pupils' learning needs; this makes them stronger professionals. Professional expertise also provides benchmarks for resilient behaviour for other teachers to follow. Ainura expresses her confidence to follow her own professional instincts below.

*The majority of our teachers think that they need to follow exactly criteria developed for lesson planning. I refuse to use those criteria because I understand that it limits pupils' learning. I decide what works or what does not work for me. I also check whether it is appropriate for my pupils and whether it limits their creativity.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

During my observation of Ainura's open lesson, which involved teachers from other schools, Ainura intentionally did not follow the prescribed criteria for assessing a lesson. When the teachers who were observing her lesson mentioned that she did not follow the rules, her response was that they did not notice that her pupils were finding the right words for their answers and were expressing their ideas freely, which she regarded to be much more valuable. Like Ainura, the other seven EEE Teachers are also considered to be experts in their subjects by their colleagues. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3 (p.46), Tsui (2009) finds

independent professional judgement to be a source of resilience in her study on expert teachers in Hong Kong; this comes through strongly in my findings. Professional expertise enables the EEE Teachers to be professionally confident, a source of support for other teachers, and positions them well at school. The EEE Teachers' portfolios reflect their extensive experience and reveal them to be authors of their own materials. Their initial resolve to follow their own professional instincts, which was rooted in self-efficacy belief, and their resilience in the face of adversity are boosted when their expertise is recognised and appreciated by other colleagues. This once again echoes Bandura's *social persuasion* (1997) and Gu and Day's *professional resilience factors* (Gu & Day, 2007) discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.21-22 and pp.25-26). As shown below, Klavdiya, who has authored many materials, is pleased to share her experience with other teachers.

*Some experienced teachers come to me and learn from my experience. I share all I can with them with great pleasure.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

I distinguish an eleventh factor closely associated to *professional expertise* that influences the continuing commitment and resilience of the EEE Teachers: *love of their subject*. This echoes earlier findings by Marrantz Cohen (2009) discussed in Chapter 3 (p.50) that love for the subject one teaches enhances the commitment to teaching and is more significant than 'love for children.' Consistent with the Marrantz Cohen study, Larisa never considered that upbringing, or *vospitanie*, was her strongest area: she prioritises teaching her favourite subject over the upbringing component of education. Interestingly, this recalls Hoyle's (2008) understanding of *restricted professionalism*, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.42-44). Hoyle does not regard *restricted professionalism* to be deficient but simply an alternative to *extended professionalism* (see also Chapter 3, pp.42-44).

*There are teachers who can do upbringing and teaching, and there are teachers who can only teach. I belong to the latter for 80 per cent. If there is an opportunity not to tutor a class I use it. I particularly like teaching mathematics in school. I think a teacher should be a master of his (her)*

*own subject, should know more than curriculum requirements, and should understand and love a subject. Only with such an attitude is a teacher able to teach pupils.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

For Oleg, his academic subject provides a space where he and his pupils find common interest. His pupils' interest in his subject brings him professional satisfaction.

*It brings me satisfaction when my pupils get interested in my subject [history]. I like it when they debate with each other without my participation and clearly show an interest, and when they thank me for a lesson.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Klavdiya regards her teaching subject as a means to get her pupils interested in learning. She combines it with her 'sensing' a child approach, described in Chapter 6 (p.105) and Chapter 8 (pp.149-150). She makes her lessons interesting by introducing plays to make sure that her pupils get interested in her subject first. In contrast to Larisa, Klavdiya offers an example of *extended professionalism* (Hoyle, 2008) (see Chapter 3, pp.42-44).

*I tell young teachers that in the first place your pupils have to fall in love with your subject. Pupils have to want to go to your lesson. They should not be saying "I do not want to go to the Russian literature lesson, I do not want to hear about Eugene Onegin<sup>10</sup>." They should be going to your lesson wanting to be present and to study. It is a life-long purpose for me - to get them [pupils] interested in the subject. Only in this case would one achieve both results and success.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

The last two factors that affect the EEE Teachers' continuing commitment and their resilience – the lack of support from school leaders and the need to cope with increasingly onerous bureaucratic tasks – are negative factors in the sense that teachers stay on in spite of them. While many teachers are driven from teaching by these things, the EEE Teachers show a determination to overcome them and take deliberate actions to build a supportive working environment in their schools.

<sup>10</sup> The main character of a novel in verse of the same name by Alexander Pushkin.

These challenges firm the resolve of the EEE Teachers to remain in teaching; and demonstrate leadership to push back against top-down controls (Sachs, 2001), as discussed in Chapter 3 (p.33), and assert more control over their teaching and working conditions (Frost, 2013a), as discussed in Chapter 1 (p.16).

The twelfth factor, then, that contributes to EEE Teachers remaining committed to the teaching profession, involves the determination to build a supportive working environment in the school, at times despite a lack of support from school leaders, echoing earlier findings (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Stoll *et al.*, 2006), which are discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.27-28) and Chapter 4 (pp.60-61). School leaders recognise that the EEE Teachers are well-respected; they, in turn, recognise that school leaders have a crucial role to play in providing an enabling environment for the professional development of all teachers. Klavdiya refers to continuous support she receives from her school principal and the recognition of her expertise.

*Throughout my teaching career our school principal has supported me in everything and asks for my advice.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

However, some of the EEE Teachers feel school leaders could be more supportive, which confirms earlier findings that to foster resilience in other teachers, or *organisational resilience* (Day & Gu, 2010), the EEE Teachers require support from school leaders, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2 (p.27). Aigul, for instance, is puzzled why school leaders are involved in administrative issues and omit pedagogical issues.

*I do not understand why our school leadership is more interested in maintaining the classrooms than pedagogy. Education and upbringing should be a priority and maintenance comes second.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

Oleg questions the increasingly bureaucratic approach to managing schools, which makes school principals prioritise preparing paperwork for authorities and school inspections.

*School leaders do not have time to provide methodological help for teachers. They want to make sure that all papers are in order if someone comes to inspect. They work for inspections and tasks from the top....*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

The thirteenth factor I identify that contributes to the EEE Teachers remaining committed to the teaching profession involves the *strategies to cope with new reform policies* the EEE Teachers start to develop. This echoes the ideas of Sachs (2003), Bangs and MacBeath (2012), Frost (2012) and others, as discussed in Chapter 1 (p.18), about how teachers start to feel the need to regain professional control over their teaching and working environments. Many new reform policies have negative consequences for collaboration between teachers or even actively discourage them from working with each other. Marina refers to increasing externally imposed bureaucracy among teachers in her school, which makes teachers preoccupied with reporting and paperwork and distances them from real pedagogical issues. She finds herself communicating about pedagogy and children mostly with her elder colleagues, who she appreciates and considers a big support for herself, and who also contribute to her commitment to teaching.

*We have a very complicated teaching staff in our school. Envy drives people, nothing else. They walk and count some folders and papers for inspection. Only a few teachers of the elder generation help me. I look at them and also try to do my best to prove something to other people. But, in reality, we do not need to prove anything to anyone. Personally, I still teach because of respect to my elder colleagues. One is 7 years older than me, the other one 12 years. If not for them, I would leave this school too.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Similarly, from my observation of Klavdiya's interactions with other teachers, it was clear that she collaborated primarily with the elder generation of teachers, who consider her exemplary and experienced. In her view, the new generation of teachers is not interested in her knowledge or her experience, as discussed earlier in Chapter 6 (p.105).

Oleg refers to the low status in society and remuneration of teachers that pushes many teachers to overwork in order to earn enough money for living. Such policies make teachers exhausted and further prevent them from working with each other.

*Every teacher is preoccupied with their own problems with no time left for collaboration between teachers...Every teacher survives and takes a big load of teaching hours and thus works in two shifts. Tiredness and lack of time take over.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

The EEE Teachers also consider that wider policy reforms, such as the teacher wage reform in 2011, instigated unhealthy competition among teachers in their schools. Instead of discussing professional issues related to educating pupils, teachers find themselves arguing about supplements to their wages, as illustrated by the account of Oleg below. This also confirms earlier discussions in Chapter 1 (pp.9-10 and p.14) that wider education reforms are fragmentary in improving teachers' working conditions.

*They [teachers] quarrel and blame each other. It becomes unpleasant to look at it and listen to it. It happens because teachers quarrel about newly introduced added coefficients<sup>11</sup> to the wage, e.g. why does one teacher have more than the other, etc.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Chynara reflects on the attitude of politicians and managers towards teachers and they come with suggestions of how teachers should be treated, as shown below.

*One needs to be able to communicate more with teachers, talk about their problems and try to solve them. And only then will this border disappear and respect for a teacher will emerge. A teacher is a human being.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

In brief, the resilience factors that influence the continuing commitment to teaching of the EEE Teachers over a long period of time point to the socially constructed nature of their resilience (Luthar *et al.*, 2000), which I discuss in

<sup>11</sup> Coefficients are used to divide the Stimulus Fund among teachers, which explicitly targets the retention of effective teachers.

Chapter 2 (p. 25). This is further enabled by supportive environment, which includes social recognition of their work by parents, colleagues, and communities.

### Summary

The building and deepening of commitment to teaching, over the EEE Teachers' long careers, confirms much of the literature on teacher professionalism that deals with teacher commitment: it provides a virtual road map through the terms and ideas. While Bandura's (1997) psychological insights into self-efficacy beliefs from the perspective of sociocognitive theory establish the foundational set of values and confidence on which longer-term commitment is built, self-efficacy beliefs nevertheless remain crucial throughout EEE Teacher's careers. They must look inwards for the professional resources to address the needs of their pupils (Guskey, 1988) (see Chapter 2, p.21) and be innovative in their teaching (Bangs & Frost, 2012), and respond to the constraints of the new managerialism (Sachs, 2003), discussed in Chapter 3 (p.34), that reshapes their teaching environments in the latter part of their careers and as they instinctively reach for the principles of the 'new professionalism' identified by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) and Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), to counteract its negative impact on their work and lives. I discuss the emergence of 'new professionalism' earlier in Chapter 3 (pp.39-40) in Figure 3.1.

As I have made clear earlier in Chapter 3 (pp.33-36), the impact of managerialism and neo-liberal policy ideas are profound for teacher professionalism everywhere (Evans, 2008; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) including Kyrgyzstan (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Interestingly, a collection of concepts from the Soviet and post-Soviet literature – Soloveichik's (2000) and Tubelsky's (2012) thoughts on *lubov k detyam*, Sukhomlinsky's (1981) insights into *prizvanie* and his notion of meaning and fulfilment, and Rebrova and Chashchukhin's (2013) ideas about moral obligation – capture a closer, more detailed cultural description than what Fullan (1993) identifies as moral purpose, which I describe in Chapter 2 (pp.28-29). The extensive Soviet and post-Soviet

literature points precisely to the centrality and universality of the aspect of teacher commitment and professionalism.

Both Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy beliefs and the Soviet and post-Soviet collection of ideas around Fullan's concept of moral purpose (1993) are indispensable to the resilience the EEE Teachers must draw upon to maintain their continuing commitment to teaching and the teaching profession. The life experiences of the EEE Teachers suggest that self-efficacy and moral purpose depend on social interactions as they become deeply embedded psychologically; resilience in particular draws on psychological resources but appears to be more fully socially constructed. This echoes ideas of Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000), discussed in Chapter 2 (p.22), about how resilience is a dynamic developmental process and appears to confirm the distinction they make with ego-resiliency, which they regard more as a personality trait.

The factors that affect resilience and continuing commitment to teaching include social ties, confirming Gu and Day (2010) discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.26-27), as well as the importance of social recognition of the EEE Teachers' work and ongoing family support. Bandura's (1997) as well as Gu and Day's (2007) ideas about teaching expertise, particularly when it stems from self-knowledge and an ensuing self-confidence, as well as the attention Marrantz Cohen (2009) draws to the importance of love for the teaching subject, echoing Hoyle's (2008) positive portrayal of restricted professionalism, also emerge as important attributes of resilience.

It takes the contribution of all of these interrelated factors, however, to adapt positively to adversity (Luthar *et al.*, 2000), whether in the form of smaller more individual efforts to improve teaching through innovation and collaboration or in response to the larger forces that are reshaping a profession. Despite the lack of support from school leaders and in the education strategy, the EEE Teachers cope with encroaching top-down bureaucracy (Sachs, 2003; Bangs & Frost 2012; Frost, 2012) demonstrating their resilience. However, it becomes more strongly asserted that they need the support of school leaders to foster resilience



in other teachers and contribute more to building a supportive environment for teaching in their schools (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Stoll *et al.*, 2006; Day & Gu, 2010). In other words, to shift from *relational resilience* of individual teachers to *organisational resilience*, teachers need the support of school leaders. This finding provides a valuable insight for my discussion in Chapter 9 on the support needed for EEE Teachers to become engaged with other teachers and extend their influence on the whole school.

Figure 7.1 below, presents the thirteen factors I identify that contribute to the continuing commitment of the EEE Teachers to teaching. While these factors may be primarily associated with the development stages of the careers of the EEE Teachers, the findings show that they accumulate and reinforce one another over the EEE Teachers' long careers.

(1) Making the choice for teaching

- being inspired by their school teachers and parents
- early affirmation in their roles as teachers

(2) Committing to the vocation

- love for children
- *prizvanie* provides purpose
- teaching provides meaning and fulfilment
- a strong moral obligation to pupils

(3) Continuous commitment

- social ties with other teachers and pupils
- recognition of their work by parents and community members
- ongoing support by family members
- professional expertise is recognised and appreciated by colleagues
- love of the teaching subject provides professional satisfaction
- importance of support from school leaders
- strategies to cope with top-down reform policies

Figure 7.1: Factors contributing to the continuing commitment

In the next chapter I discuss how the EEE Teachers build and enact their professionalism in ways that make them exemplary for other teachers in their schools.

## Chapter 8: EEE Teachers and enacted professionalism

In this chapter I discuss the findings in relation to how EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan enact their professionalism. The findings demonstrate how the eight EEE Teachers are exemplary across a spectrum of professional practice and how this shapes their professional practice. Enacted professionalism in Kyrgyzstan, following Evans (2008), involves what EEE Teachers do actively every day to improve their teaching and the learning experience for their pupils. The seven principles of new professionalism identified by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) provide an entry point for my discussion on how EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan enact their professionalism. Niyozov's (2011) and MacBeath's (2012) criteria of the teaching profession also provide insights into my findings; both reach beyond individual professionalities of the eight EEE Teachers to contemplate the teaching profession itself.

The seven principles of new professionalism (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) help to structure the presentation of my findings in this chapter: each is considered individually but may apply to one or more of the findings. The principles thus give facets of meaning, or insights, into the findings rather than discrete categories.

### Discretionary judgement around curriculum and content

Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) regard the greater use of *discretionary judgement* by teachers in relation to pedagogy, curriculum and care as an aspirational principle of the new professionalism. The EEE Teachers in my study certainly believe that the best teaching strategy for their pupils is based on their professional judgement skills. Faced with the lack of clear guidelines to implement a new curriculum, for example, certain of the EEE Teachers developed their own strategies to deal with a lack of support for new top-down initiatives. This is demonstrated by Larisa in her mathematics teaching and Oleg in teaching history, both at Kanykey School. The number of teaching hours was



cut, but the number of themes that teachers had to cover remained the same. Teachers in Kanykey School struggled to cope with a newly introduced curriculum without clear guidelines for implementation.

*The new curriculum imposes time constraints. So, each lesson pupils have to learn a new theme without having enough time to solve tasks. So I try to adjust my teaching mode to this curriculum as much as I can, e.g. by spending less time on certain themes and allocating more time for more difficult themes.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Oleg mentions that the number of hours for teaching history was halved: he has one lesson instead of two lessons per week for his subject. When he contacted a local department of education to request a new syllabus on history, he was told that the new syllabus and guidelines would be provided later. Three years after he requested it, he was still waiting. The guidelines were still not there. He also manages as well as he can using his professional judgement.

*I shorten all themes as much as I can by myself. There are constant changes in curriculum in our school education. I have to include more themes into half the timeframe. I have to deal with these shortened hours by myself because no one helps. Guidelines and new syllabus are not provided to a teacher, a teacher is left alone to deal with this.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Klavdiya, Oleg and other teachers in Semetey School complain that parents send mother-tongue Kyrgyz-speaking children to study in Russian-speaking classes. In Klavdiya's village many Kyrgyz-speaking parents do this in the hope that their children will get a better education in Russian and that better Russian will pave the way for future work in Russia. According to teachers in Klavdiya's school, this puts Kyrgyz-speaking pupils under enormous stress because of the struggle to keep up with the work and parents are not able to help with homework because their Russian is not sufficient either. Teachers find this problem difficult to address. Klavdiya bends the rules to find more appropriate materials for non-native Russian-speaking pupils and uses them at her own risk.

*We raised this issue several times but policy makers never replied. In my classes I teach Russian language as a mother tongue to non-native Russian speakers. Most of my pupils are Kyrgyz and Uighurs<sup>12</sup> and so, to make it less challenging for them, I try to use a 'Russian language in Kyrgyz schools' textbook in my lessons. I am not allowed to use it officially but it works for pupils. I did this for the sake of my pupils and for their better learning.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

The lack of textbooks for newly introduced curriculum subjects is a problem that persists. In my observation of Aigul's 8<sup>th</sup> grade geography lesson, there were only five textbooks available in a class of 36 pupils. When I asked Aigul about the lack of textbooks, she responded that there were no new geography textbooks available in the school. The five textbooks that I saw were outdated and did not correspond with the newly introduced curriculum. Aigul's solution was to use some information from the old textbooks and get pupils to take supplementary notes which she provided. She also asked pupils who have access to the internet to find information on the topic.

*I cannot comprehend why they do not produce new textbooks first and then introduce a new curriculum. They make changes in the curriculum and force teachers to work without new corresponding textbooks. Our old textbooks, which are scarce, also do not correspond to the curriculum. So, I manage to fill this gap by finding various sources of information for certain topics.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

Another example of the EEE Teachers using discretionary judgement is in the social sciences, in subjects such as history and ethics. Oleg has taught history since the final years of the USSR; he found the changing official versions of history to be particularly challenging and he struggled to find the appropriate material to use to explain things to his pupils.

*Remembering my lesson about the Prague Spring 1968, it was extremely difficult to shift from 'brotherly help' of the USSR to Gorbachev's statement that it was an invasion and intervention in internal affairs of Czechoslovakia. I remember saying to my pupils: "I do apologise for wrong information here - it was an intervention, not internationalism."*

<sup>12</sup> Uighurs are a Turkic ethnic minority group living in Kyrgyzstan.

*Perestroika of notions was cutting through 'the flesh'. For many years people thought one way and one day it turned out to be wrong. However, it was easier for me if I compare myself with more experienced teachers at that time. It was easier for me to change my views.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg still finds it difficult to adapt some elements of ethics education for his pupils of non-Kyrgyz ethnicity because the current ethics education curriculum reflects the culture and traditions of Kyrgyz people and does not reflect the cultures of ethnic minorities. To respond to this difficult situation Oleg approaches teaching ethics by introducing such topics as friendship and finds his own materials to teach his 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade pupils, as there are still no clear syllabus or textbooks in Russian-speaking schools.

Niyozov (2011) regards the ability to approach the content of taught subjects critically to be an important criterion of the teaching profession (see Chapter 3, p.41), what he calls *the problem of the objective knowledge base*. This echoes earlier findings about teachers in Kyrgyzstan dealing with 'knowledge base problems' in their subjects (DeYoung, 2011). Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) principle of new professionalism envisages the *exercise of discretionary judgement* in relation to pedagogy, curriculum and care of pupils. In the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan context, however, curriculum and content, although newly reformed, remain contested and largely unsupported, despite the ongoing support of international donors such as the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF and others. This section has focused on discretionary judgement the EEE Teachers use to find their own solutions to the lack of guidelines, teaching materials and learning in relation to the newly introduced subject curriculum. The care of students, of course, within the Soviet and post-Soviet tradition is a significant part of teachers' professional ethos; a discussion of the findings follows in the next section.

### Active care for pupils

A second principle of what Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) regard to be new teacher professionalism acknowledges the emotional as well as the cognitive aspects of pupils and thus involves a commitment to active care. Caring for pupils, or rather the professional concern for *vospitanie* (the upbringing component of education)<sup>13</sup> remains a strong component of professionalism in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, as earlier research findings confirm (DeYoung, 2007; Teleshaliyev, 2013). My discussion in Chapter 2 (p.30) explains that *vospitanie* (upbringing) and *lubov k detyam* (love for children) were significantly part of the Soviet pedagogy and teacher professionalism (Grechko, 1951; Sukhomlinsky, 1981; Soloveichik, 2000; Gazman, 1995; Niyozov & Shamatov, 2006; De Young, 2007; Tubelsky, 2012; Amonashvili, 2013).

My findings offer a deeper understanding of the scope of the upbringing component of teaching. Each EEE Teacher had previous experience as a class tutor, although only five had responsibility as the *class jetekchi* (class tutor), which involves a formal role of care for pupils. The responsibility involves keeping a personal file on each pupil that comprises their so called *social passport*. The social passport (as shown in Appendix J) includes information on the personal background and academic standing of each pupil: their parents' employment status, any records of juvenile misconduct etc.

The five EEE Teachers go beyond their official responsibilities as *class jetekchi* for which they are paid an insignificant addition to their wage<sup>14</sup>, and are strongly committed to looking after their pupils. They demonstrate the attributes of Hoyle's (1974, 2008) *extended professionalism*, which are discussed in Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3 (p.43), and MacBeath's (2012) *altruism* as a criterion of teacher professionalism, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (p.40). As shown below, Chynara

<sup>13</sup> In the Soviet and post-Soviet system, teachers are traditionally responsible for both *bilim beruu* (Kyrgyz) or *obrazovaniye* (Russian), education, as well as *tarbiya* (Kyrgyz) or *vospitanie* (Russian), which is best translated as upbringing.

<sup>14</sup> Teachers get paid 390 Kyrgyzstan soms (USD 5.38 as of 22.11.2015) monthly for 4 hours of work as a class tutor. They should conduct one hour-long class a week.

helps her socially disadvantaged pupils during difficult periods by involving other pupils, and teaching them about social awareness and helping others.

*I try to make all pupils in my class equal. Some come from rich families, some come from poor families. My goal is not only to teach them ... I try to show them that we are all equal. One of my poorer pupils lost his mother and I suggested that all the children go to his house ... to support their classmate at a difficult time. I told my pupils that "the only reason to do it is to help your classmate." We helped to wash dishes, chop wood, start the samovar [a large water boiler] during the funeral. Later this pupil came to me and thanked me for our help.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

The EEE Teachers regarded their pupils' development holistically, incorporating the attendant social and personal dimension, especially in addressing the difficulties of socially vulnerable pupils. This is consistent with their notion of *prizvanie* (sense of vocation), as discussed in Chapter 7 (pp.122-125). As shown below, Gulnur helps her vulnerable pupil, whose parents pay little attention to his education.

*I have to learn about a pupil from all corners and I have to get acquainted with his (her) parents as well. Why does a pupil miss lessons? I go to their homes. Sometimes my family says that I spend too much energy and nerves on my pupils' lives. I come home and think about my pupils too. That is why a teacher should be committed to her pupils, love the teaching profession, and tolerate everything... I went many times to the house of a pupil who regularly misses his classes. No one cares, no one looks after him. His parents are divorced - his mother is in town, his dad stays with him at home. I wanted to talk to his mother about her son but she never picks up her phone. He still does not have all the documents he needs to bring to school. When he comes to school I spend extra time with him by teaching him.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

The EEE Teachers also believed that they could succeed in making every pupil learn better by addressing their individual learning needs. As illustrated by the story of Gulnur below, the EEE Teachers adjust their teaching styles to encourage every child to learn at her or his own pace by including children who have difficulties in learning and socially vulnerable children. They do not impose a rigid time frame.

*Many teachers think that a pupil who falls behind other pupils will not succeed. I cannot think like that. I make efforts to allow a pupil to catch up with other pupils. I differentiate pupils by their level of knowledge and try to help them accordingly to become better. I allocate much more time to those who fall behind other pupils. I help an average pupil to reach a level of an A-pupil, and a pupil who falls behind to reach an average level. Knowledge has to be accessible to all pupils. This is my main goal.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

I noted in my observation of Gulnur's teaching of her 1<sup>st</sup> grade class that she took a seat at the desk at the back of the classroom and called each pupil to read to her, one by one. Towards the end of the class, a male pupil started to read to her slowly in syllables, noticeably slower than other pupils. Gulnur adopted a strict teacher look but was patient with his reading. After he had finished, she said that he needed to wait for her so that they could walk home together. The pupil assured her that he would go straight home by himself; she agreed, although she reminded him that he did not do so the previous time. She reminded him to ask his mother to come to school. Similarly to Gulnur, Marina has a pupil who has a stutter and while asking him she pays attention and treats him with patience and provides extra time for his answers.

Other EEE Teachers, like Klavdiya, who are not class tutors, also demonstrate care for pupils; for example, Klavdiya's personal approach, which she calls 'sensing' a child, as described in Chapter 6 (p.105). In my observation of her Russian language lesson to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade class, Klavdiya engages all her pupils except two male pupils who sit at the back of the class; neither has a textbook or a writing pad on the desk. They sat quietly. At one point, one of them lies down on one cheek and keeps his face like this for a long time. Later, in response to my question as to why she did not engage the two pupils at the back of the class, she pointed out that they had very serious issues in their families and she had tried to talk to them individually after the class. Below, Klavdiya explained how she 'senses' a child.

*I feel that I have a contact with my pupils. They understand me and I 'sense' them. It means a lot to be able to 'sense' a child. I feel the way they like my teaching and they learn from me. For example, one of my*

*pupils did not do his homework. I asked him why and in response I heard that his father was drunk and sent him to bed. His father probably beats his wife too. I try to calmly work with this pupil because I cannot make him study forcefully. I understand his problems and try to adjust my teaching and sometimes I can see that he tries to write.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Some of the five EEE Teachers felt responsible for their pupils even after they graduated. They attempted to maintain a child-centred learning environment for them throughout their schooling, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary school, as illustrated by the story of Ainura below, by sharing information about teaching approaches that had worked for former pupils with other teachers in her school.

*I always tell other teachers who will teach in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and onwards that my pupils used to be taught interactively, they are good and special. If possible I always ask our school principal to appoint a teacher who will correspond to my pupils' needs and learning style.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

In summary, the EEE Teachers see each pupil as a 'whole person' with problems and difficulties. Hoyle and McCormick (1976) consider that the 'caring and compassionate' side of teaching makes a teacher different from other professionals. This professional attribute also reflects *prizvanie* as described by Sukhomlinsky (1981) and the 'altruism' of the teaching profession that MacBeath (2012) identifies as a criterion of professionalism, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (p.40).

### **The social and moral purpose of pedagogy**

For Goodson and Hargreaves (1996), the professional principle of engaging the moral and social purpose of what is taught, as well as its value, is all about curriculum and content. The sense of moral obligation to pupils, associated both with *prizvanie* (the sense of vocation) and the *prosvetitel'skaya missiya* (the sense of moral mission), that forms part of the professional identity of the EEE Teachers in this research tends to lead them to think beyond curriculum and

content. However, as this section illustrates, the EEE Teachers perceive their own performance and professionalism through the prism of their pupils' achievements.

EEE Teachers regard *their pupils' success to be their own success*. Their narratives reveal strongly that pupil achievement is associated with their happiest professional moments, strengthening professional beliefs and job satisfaction, as Ainura illustrates below.

*The happiest moments for me are when my pupils come prepared. My eyes get wet when I see my pupils getting only 'A' and 'B' marks. Some teachers associate their happy moments with getting a title of the El Agartuu Otlichnigi, but I totally disagree with them.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

The presence of these positive emotions about their pupils also confirms the importance of *the emotional dimension* of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998; Gu & Day, 2007), discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.23-24), for the EEE Teachers. In the example below, Larisa, who teaches mathematics and some of whose many graduates go on to study sciences abroad, finds it professionally rewarding when her graduates return to visit her in school.

*One of my happy moments is when I can associate with my graduates who come to visit me after a few years in order to thank me for everything I taught them. I find it very sincere and rewarding.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Chynara, a Kyrgyz mother-tongue speaker who teaches Russian at Seitek School, directly associated her performance with the progress made by her pupils over the years. Her commitment to teaching is bolstered by her pupils' performance and support.

*One of my happy moments was when my 11<sup>th</sup> graders, who I taught since grade 5 and could not speak a word in Russian back then, skilfully corrected my mistake on a blackboard while I was writing, without pointing out my mistake.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Certain EEE Teachers create a better learning environment for their pupils in classrooms to encourage them to achieve better results. This has helped the EEE Teachers develop long-term *mutually respectful relationships with their pupils*. These might not have been conventional in a post-Soviet school. Ainura believes that pupils should be treated with respect from an early age; she regards the establishing of *trust between herself and her primary school pupils*, to be an important attribute of her professionalism.

*I do not require my pupils to sit still, quietly. I want them to feel free. I do not want them to be shy in front of me like with other teachers. As a result, pupils tell me their wishes and what happens at their homes. I treat them as equal partners. They treat me the same way. It all has a good meaning. Many teachers are surprised when my pupils sit quietly and study without me in the classroom. The main thing for me is to trust my pupils and in return they trust me... It is important for me to treat a human being equally, to find a common language with people, not to be mean and consider myself superior. With my pupils I do the same - I find a common language with them, I talk to them as equal people, I understand their problems and I make them share the truth with me without being shy. For example, my pupils confess that they were not able to do homework without being afraid.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Larisa explains how her professional belief in establishing mutual respect between her and her pupils makes her job pleasant and meaningful for her. These relationships make her look forward to coming to school and communicating with her pupils. Similarly to Ainura, Larisa's *pupils are at the centre of her professional interests*. This professional trait makes her exemplary for other teachers.

*I try to treat all of my pupils equally and in a friendly way. I do not even try, I treat them with respect. In general, I treat all people equally with respect. I have developed such an attitude to people since my childhood. I like neither preferential treatment nor offending anyone... One of the reasons I stay in school is mutual understanding with children. They raise my vitality. They make my life beautiful because I can communicate with them. Pupils are people with whom I communicate with pleasure. When I am on school holidays my vitality goes down.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

The EEE Teachers *value opinions of others* and consider these to be important stimuli for creativity in their work. They oppose rigidity, as illustrated by the story of Larisa below.

*It is difficult when a teacher is stubborn and does not listen to other views. A teacher must be quite flexible. A teacher cannot be rigid and stubborn because a teacher teaches so many different pupils and so teaching requires adjustment to every pupil. In this situation one cannot just be stubborn because this job is all about creativity. One needs to be able to be perceptive to other people's views.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

The EEE Teachers also embrace diversity in their classrooms. Marina, who teaches in a multi-ethnic school, organises the tutor period to discuss the moral and social issues that are important for developing civic responsibility. Her pupils presented a session on multi-culturalism and its value for their community in one of her lessons. As illustrated in Figure 8.1 below, this folding presentation, developed by Marina's pupils is entitled 'Good wishes to friends of different ethnicities'; it illustrates how she emphasises *valuing diversity* and *respect for the other*, in her teaching, demonstrating also the professional principle of engaging *the moral and social purposes* of what is taught (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996).



Figure 8.1: Presentation on multi-culturalism prepared by pupils of Marina

In brief, the moral and social purpose not only of what is taught but of actually being a teacher is important for the EEE Teachers. This is confirmed for them in the achievements of their pupils, through the mutual trust they establish and the relationships they build. The moral and social purpose of pedagogy and what is

### Professional knowledge

*I also work during summer holidays to compile an exercise book for my pupils. Of course not all tasks there are developed by me but I compile my own. It takes a lot of time because apart from compiling I have to type them and it takes a lot of time. So, I do this work to develop myself professionally. I share these exercises with my pupils later on. I have a lot of authoring written by hand but to type it and print them out is a difficult task.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

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*I invented a lot of teaching methods by myself. I use games and I try to involve almost all children.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

1. Птички голубые, свистать по бестинге дождливая погода,  
есть по шоссе, расквашать по-испански, упасть навзничь,  
нечастные дни, березная роса, звездная ночь, выжаренные  
ягоды.

В полтора метра, во время карандаша, пиломатериала станиц, двад-  
цать два грамма, хороший помощник, письмо пшеницы, семьдесят  
пять эскадронов, минуться в плашки, в шесть раз меньше,  
сказать десятому восемь нин, вытиски ляминский, выжаренная  
беском номер, утешение теньюшки, пятнадцать восемь номер.

Форма кривого значета

Регистратури

тип	тп	тротинг утеша фильтр
сера	са	серай утеш роса
фран	фа	франа кобель кола
артис	та	артисера вытеш утешат
рагу	та	рупор нушкин крч

Figure 8.2: *Vocabulary test* developed by Klavdiya



Similarly, Gulnur developed a visual *mosaic* teaching strategy (see also Figure 8.3 below) for teaching in primary school 20 years ago. According to her, so many primary class teachers use this approach in their classes now that she has stopped thinking about it as her product.



Figure 8.3: A visual *mosaic* learning aid invented by Gulnur

The materials developed by the EEE Teachers looked as if they were written many years ago; and were not typed or documented properly by the authors. The authors pointed to the lack of time when I asked them about documenting properly, publishing and copyright. Clearly, the considerable practical and theoretical knowledge of the EEE Teachers who develop materials remains in their classroom or for circulation within schools or amongst small circles of teachers. Teachers in focus groups in the four schools referred to obstacles that were created at the national level, which includes obtaining approval from various committees before any original material can be published for wider use.

While several EEE Teachers accumulate their experience and create professional knowledge in these lesson materials, the isolated nature of these efforts renders impossible any impact of their specialist knowledge on the development of the teaching profession as a whole, or the wider education system.

It is for this reason that a level of formalisation of sharing, gathering of materials and expertise could be helpful for in-service training or the induction of new teachers, ultimately building and strengthening the teaching profession.

MacBeath (2012:15) includes such elements as 'theoretical knowledge and concomitant skills', 'a code of professional conduct' and 'legal recognition and professional closure' in his list of criteria of the teaching profession, presumably for similar reasons. As I explain later on in this chapter, in the section that deals with collaboration between teachers (pp.161-167), not even the *pedagogicaly keneshme* (all school teachers' meeting or pedagogical councils) are utilised as they could be for sharing knowledge, materials, and effective methods for teaching. Continuous learning, which I discuss next, is a similarly singular, individual endeavour.

### Continuous learning

Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) position their principle of continuous learning as a counterpoint to the deprofessionalisation that typically attends top-down reforms (see Chapter 3, p.39). The USSR's *uchitelya innovatory* (teachers who innovate) described by Tubelsky (1995) and Sutherland (1999), which I discuss in Chapter 3 (p.48) similarly reflect a continuous learning process that was required to transform authoritarian pedagogy during *perestroika*. Others have identified the importance of continuous learning as desirable in itself, in the absence of any perceived need for political resistance: Schön (1983) calls for reflection in action and reflection on action; Tsui (2009) points to the need for learning in the context of institutional change; and Stoll and Seashore Louis (2007) and Frost (2012) regard continuous learning to be integral to collaboration between teachers (which I discuss in the subsequent section).

Learning opportunities vary for the EEE Teachers. Every 5 years they attend compulsory in-service training organised by the Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE). They received on-site training through international projects such as *Sapatuu Bilim* (funded by USAID) and RWCT (funded by the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan). They also pursue self-directed education, but with varying levels of commitment.



Larisa does not think highly of the quality of compulsory in-service teacher development she had to attend every 5 years, even though she always found there was something new to learn. She mentions learning new things about the history of Kyrgyzstan that she found revealing, for example:

*I like the idea of learning new things because I like to study. I like to be in the role of a student.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Larisa and Chynara dream of pursuing a *kandidat nauk* degree in their subjects. However, only Chynara has taken serious steps towards pursuing her research degree; she enrolled for a *kandidat nauk* degree programme in developmental psychology. Chynara enrolled for her *kandidat nauk* because she believed it would be a form of self-actualisation and that knowledge of psychology would improve her understanding of pupils.

*Later in my teaching career I understood that it is not just a subject that I teach. I realise that children's psychology and development play an important role in improving my teaching. We all change as time passes by. For example, 11<sup>th</sup> graders 10 years ago and 11<sup>th</sup> graders now are totally different. I am a different person from the teacher I used to be 10 years ago. I think I grew up with children. So, I decided to continue my studies because this way I will understand my pupils more and hopefully they will benefit too. This year I completed my master's degree in psychology. I needed that for myself. I always try to move forward. I need more challenges. So, this December I entered a *kandidat nauk* programme. After my school classes I run to my university.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Formal degrees or in-service teacher development opportunities are not the only avenues for learning: the EEE Teachers also *learn from pupils and from the practice of younger and novice teachers*. In my observation of Ainura's literature lesson in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she unintentionally misinterprets an answer of one of her pupils; he retorts that she misunderstood him. She immediately apologises to the pupil for her wrong interpretation of his answer in front of the whole class. During our interview, she explained that she once observed how one of her pupils apologised to another pupil because of a mistake. She reflected on this

and realised that she too makes mistakes as a teacher and she incorporated 'apologising to pupils' into her practice. Ainura is a highly experienced primary class teacher and mentors novice teachers. This involves attending each other's lessons, which also provides a learning opportunity for Ainura.

*I, as a mentor, attend classes of young and novice teachers to advise them. There are moments when I see that there is something new for me and I learn from them. I compliment a teacher for new strategies and I tell her that I am going to try that in my lessons as well. Later I try to adapt learnt strategies in my practice.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Marina, as a senior teacher with 36 years of teaching experience, told me about a similar situation when her pupil noticed a mistake in a sentence she wrote on the blackboard. She was at the back of the classroom and had to come up to the front to correct it. While she was walking to the blackboard she thought about reprimanding the pupil for pointing out her mistake, but after she corrected it she openly thanked the pupil and rewarded him with a '5' ('A'). Marina reflected later in the interview that it was a learning process and that pupils should be encouraged for noticing mistakes, not punished.

EEE Teachers consider that they learn from other experienced teachers as Aigul relates below.

*I read a lot, searched a lot, worked a lot as a young teacher. I learnt from more experienced teachers. Now, when I do not know something, I seek advice from our veteran teacher, who is much more experienced than me. I can share my thoughts with her.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

While EEE Teachers learnt from more experienced teachers mostly at the beginning of their teaching careers, they also developed the confidence to learn on their own, which helped to build on their personal strengths and be more self-sufficient, as illustrated by the stories of Larisa and Klavdiya below.

*I felt that more experienced teachers knew much more than I did. However, I was always self-confident in my abilities to learn.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Klavdiya has a different attitude to learning from other teachers. She is confident in her methodology of teaching to the extent that she considers her knowledge and experience are sufficient to rely on. She is not keen to learn from other teachers in her school; instead, she believes she has something to offer to other teachers who are less experienced than she is. Huberman (1989) had a similar finding on veteran teachers in Switzerland, as I discuss in Chapter 2 (pp.24-25). Klavdiya also considers that novice teachers are inexperienced but unwilling to learn from her experience, although she does share her expertise with other teachers if they approach her.

*I think I am self-sufficient as a professional and many consider me as a teacher with incontestable authority. Some training I missed because my husband was very sick. Perhaps, also I did not need them because younger teachers needed those more. I have my own methods and I would rather develop mine than to try new because I am not sure yet whether the latter would work for me. I do not think that I need it with my years of experience even though I try to gain new knowledge, but not from our teachers... I read a lot of books and think through how I can make my lessons more interesting.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Oleg considers that there is no-one in the in-service teacher development institutes he could learn anything from about his history subject. It is not that he considers his knowledge to be sufficient, but rather that he believes there is inadequate expertise in the training institutes. Instead, he delves into the books he bought during *perestroika* at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, to get information he needs for his classes. He also stays in touch with other teachers he considers to be more expert.

*All books I use now in my classes I purchased at the end of the USSR. At the moment I do not know who I can ask for help about the problems I encounter in teaching history... When I come to training organised by experts from the KAE or the MoES, they tell me that what they teach I have already known and there is nothing I can learn from them. So, what can I say? I still stay in touch with experienced teachers and we call each other; however, more frequently they learn from me.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

EEE Teachers grow professionally by *reflecting* on their past and present experiences. This reflection is important for moving forward in their careers and understanding the essence of the profession, as illustrated in Chynara's example below, recalling Schön's (1983) *reflective practitioner* (see Chapter 3, pp.45-46).

*In the beginning of my career I focused on my subject, I wanted compliments about my work, I wanted to stand out among my colleagues etc. Now I feel proud of my ability to understand my pupils and the way they learn. I think it comes with time.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Continuous learning is an essential attribute of the professionalism of the EEE Teachers. They show themselves to be in continuous search for improvement of their practice either by learning from other teachers or reflecting on their own practice.

### Collaborative cultures of help and support

The principle of new professionalism concerned with collaboration involves a commitment to developing 'collaborative cultures' of help and support with other colleagues (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). This arguably takes collaboration one step further than spontaneous and informal collaboration between teachers, cementing it into professional practice. This section discusses the extent to which structured forms of collaboration that are formally set out and approved by the government of the Kyrgyz Republic (Law on Education, GoK, 2006; Law on the Status of Teacher, GoK, 2001) have been able to develop 'collaborative cultures' in schools. Formal collaboration occurs within the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department meeting), the *pedagogicalykeneshme* (all school teachers' meeting or pedagogical council) and *nasaatchylyk* (mentoring). I look at how the EEE Teachers collaborate with other teachers on their own initiative in greater details in Chapter 9.

EEE Teachers pointed out that it has become rare that teachers discuss matters of pedagogy at the *usulduk keneshme* and the *pedagogicalykeneshme*. These

meetings are conducted once per quarter, i.e. four times per academic year. When I analysed the agendas for the *pedagogicalyk keneshme* meetings in four schools, I noticed teachers spent a lot of time discussing the academic performance of pupils, reporting on the numbers of adequately and poorly performing pupils in each class, or the preparation for Olympiads in various subjects at school, district or national levels. When I asked Oleg about the collaboration between teachers on pedagogical matters, he referred rather to the lack of discussions about pedagogy at the all school meetings.

*Pedagogicalyk keneshme is mostly about reporting on a number of excellent pupils, good pupils, pupils who fail etc.*  
(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Similarly, Klavdiya considers that teachers in her school talked mostly about pupils' academic performance and those who have social problems at *pedagogicalyk keneshme*.

*At our current pedagogicalyk keneshme we mostly talk about the academic standing of pupils and socially disadvantaged children and their families. We try to look at reasons why pupils do not want to study and how to work with them etc. We used to have more thematic pedagogicalyk keneshme but they became rare. We had one on professional ethics many years ago and it went very well. We plan to conduct one now on the same issue in relation to a recent conflict between a teacher and a pupil, but I am not quite sure how well it will be conducted.*  
(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

My observation of *pedagogicalyk keneshme* in Manas and Kanykey Schools confirms that teachers seldom discuss pedagogical issues in any detail. Indeed, a lot of time is devoted to discussion of Olympiads and pupils. The agenda of a thematic *pedagogicalyk keneshme* at Manas School was to cover ways of improving *vospitanie* (the upbringing) of pupils and the role of a teacher. The meeting started with opening remarks by the school principal, who greeted 38 teachers and then gave the floor to the deputy principal who read her presentation for 20 minutes from slides which were projected on the wall. The presentation was quite enriching and was full of quotations of famous pedagogues on the teacher's role in upbringing and setting an example. At the end of the

presentation teachers were divided into three groups to discuss tasks related to ethical behaviour. However, the tasks were not related to the content of the presentation and teachers had to respond to multiple choice questions, which were rather about observing etiquette not *vospitanie*. For example, the questions were about putting the correct stress in a word, or discussing who should greet first if a subordinate and a boss meet. The deputy principal, perhaps unsurprisingly, remarked that a subordinate should greet first.

At the *pedagogicalyk keneshme* in Manas School, teachers did not discuss situations that they face with their pupils in real life or the issues that really matter in their school. For instance, in my interviews with Marina and Aigul, who are from Manas School, they informed me of cases of unethical behaviour by some teachers - including the school principal who happened to yell at and pinch some pupils - that they felt should be addressed at the *pedagogicalyk keneshme*. Instead, at the meeting the school principal thanked a deputy principal for her presentation and asked for someone to volunteer feedback on the information that was provided. No-one volunteered so the school principal asked Marina to say few words. She responded with a smile suggesting that even although she had not volunteered, she would respond. She talked about the important role of a teacher in raising pupils based on her personal experience. She provided examples she had observed of when pupils behaved like a teacher and teachers behaved like pupils. In one example a teacher had disrupted her lesson by letting her children shout in the corridor. She said that some teachers in the school had double standards. At the end of her input, she congratulated all teachers for the New Year and invited everyone to come to her classroom and learn from her experience if they have any questions on professional issues. In my interview with Marina, she told me that she did not feel indifferent about what happened in her school with other teachers, who she regards need professional help.

The second item in the agenda was devoted to academic results of pupils. The deputy principal read results for each class and pointed out the two classes with the poorest performance. The school principal, in front of the whole group, asked

the class tutors of those two classes to ensure the results improved. At the end of the meeting the deputy principal asked teachers to favour pupils who could potentially graduate with distinction. The meeting ended by informing teachers about the dates for the forthcoming *pedagogicaly keneshme* of class tutors the following week.

The meeting in Manas School was more about 'box ticking' for school leaders because it did not allow for substantial discussions among teachers. I also learnt later from Marina, who attended many of the *pedagogicaly keneshme* in her school, that the meeting was at least better prepared than the previous meetings. She laughed and thanked me for attending their gathering because she thought that the meeting was only 'well' organised because I had attended.

The example of Marina's participation in the *pedagogicaly keneshme* demonstrated that some EEE Teachers are committed to work with colleagues in *collaborative cultures of help and support* on real issues even beyond the formal gatherings of teachers, suggesting a principle of *enacted professionalism* (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), as discussed in Chapter 3 (p.39). Her willingness to help other teachers voluntarily also shows the attribute of *extended professionalism* (Hoyle, 2008), as discussed in Chapter 3 (pp.42-44).

Questions of pedagogy seem to be discussed more substantially in the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department meeting). I observed one of these meetings of primary class teachers at Semetey School, which was facilitated by Ainura. The meeting involved six Russian and Kyrgyz-speaking primary class teachers, and took place in Ainura's classroom. Teachers sat at four desks facing each other. The agenda of the meeting included three items: (1) gathering opinions about the *Reading Together*<sup>15</sup> project funded by USAID; (2) a discussion entitled, 'Is it correct to let a pupil repeat the year?' and (3) preparation for the Nowruz<sup>16</sup> celebration. Ainura asked for feedback about the *Reading Together* project by asking, in Kyrgyz, what teachers found useful in their practice. She informed

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/kyrgyz-republic/fact-sheets/quality-reading-project-reading-together>.

<sup>16</sup> Nowruz is an ancestral festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature, and is celebrated on 21 March.

them they needed to produce minutes of the meeting for school leaders. She engaged two novice primary class teachers from the outset to encourage them to participate more equally with the more experienced teachers. All teachers found the reading strategies that they used from the project useful. However, they also remarked that many of the strategies repeat strategies from the earlier *Sapatuu Bilim* project, which was funded by USAID a few years back. Teachers complained that in the first three primary classes, pupils study by playing, but in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade the pace increases tremendously and this is a big shock for pupils. One teacher mentioned that in mathematics pupils learn to count up to 1000 by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and then in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade they go up to billion figures, which was quite difficult for pupils to process. Teachers also mentioned that the alphabet could be learnt faster by pupils in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. They spent three or four lessons on each letter, which the teachers consider to be too much.

The second issue was devoted to pupils who repeat a class. Ainura was concerned about a pupil who refused to go to school because of poor socialisation before coming to school. Ainura suggested to a parent that the child sit in her class informally so that he could learn how to socialise with other children. A parent suggested that her child came to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade next year. It turned out that the rule does not allow it unless a parent writes an official request that her child repeats the 1<sup>st</sup> class. Ainura's main concern was that the child would be traumatised if he fell behind his peers and repeated a class. Ainura was upset about the whole situation and asked for an opinion from her colleagues. Her colleagues agreed that this issue should be raised with school leaders to establish a psychological-pedagogical commission, which would decide what to do with such children. Teachers also shared their concerns about parents who send their children to study in Russian-speaking classes; this makes the learning process very difficult for Kyrgyz-speaking children. The third issue about preparation for Nooruz went quickly. Ainura thanked everyone and the *usulduk keneshme* came to a close. This meeting provided an example of how a *collaborative culture* (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) could be strengthened in schools in Kyrgyzstan within the scope of existing policy: it was handled in such a way that teachers shared their opinions and had discussions about real

situations. However, I would still describe Ainura's professionalism as *extended-but-constrained*, after Hoyle (2008), because the actions she would like to take are unsupported by the school - see my discussion on *extended-but-constrained* professionalism (*ibid.*) in Chapter 3 (p.43).

Certain EEE Teachers also serve as mentors for novice teachers within the *nasaatchylyk* system<sup>17</sup> - a formal system of mentorship for novice teachers who have less than 3 years of teaching experience. Typically, experienced teachers and novice teachers are linked with each other by school leaders for a 3-year period. In the case of Oleg and his mentee Elena, a novice history teacher, the formal papers were filed to arrange their work together; however, Oleg was never paid for his work as a mentor. Below, they recall their experience.

*I mentored several novice teachers, including students of pedagogical universities at their practicum. I taught them every single detail including how to walk in the classroom and where to stand during a lesson. Elena, my mentee, who came to our school to teach history, told me that everything she learnt about teaching was from me, i.e. in school.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

*I learnt to work and to become interested in teaching here in school from Oleg, not in university. I always received help when I needed it from him on teaching materials, methods of teaching, psychological aspects with pupils and teachers, class tutoring, working with parents, etc.*

(Elena, Kanykey School)

This example demonstrates both that novice teachers are less knowledgeable and learn about teaching on-the-job, and how important the EEE Teachers are for transferring their experience and shaping the professional identity of novice teachers. Since Oleg provides his support within the formal mentorship scheme, which is prescribed top-down, I describe his professionalism as *extended-but-constrained* (Hoyle, 2008), as discussed in Chapter 3 (pp.43).

<sup>17</sup> Mentors get paid about 350 Kyrgyz soms (USD 4.83 as of 22.11.2015) per month.

In summary, there does appear to be potential for strengthening collaborative cultures of help and support in schools in Kyrgyzstan within the constraints of existing policy. This would reflect elements of new professionalism that Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) espouse. Based on my data, it appears that most collaboration between teachers happens through the formally prescribed *pedagogicalyk keneshme* (all school meeting), the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department meeting) and *nasaatchylyk* (mentoring) relationship. The professional input by the EEE Teachers through these formal channels is welcomed and appreciated by their colleagues, confirming the EEE Teachers' status as exemplary teachers. Importantly, the EEE Teachers also collaborate with other teachers on their own initiative outside of these formal channels. These interactions are described more fully in the discussion of findings to my third question, which I look at in greater detail in Chapter 9.

### Partnerships with parents

The seventh and last principle of new professionalism I discuss involves what Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) describe as 'occupational heteronomy rather than self-protective autonomy'. This involves an inversion of the instinctive logic that autonomy is preferable to heteronomy (subjection to an external and imposed will) as a professional principle. Goodson and Hargreaves (*ibid.*) qualify this inversion to make two points about professionalism: one, that an engagement with stakeholders in the wider community is desirable for education, that education needs to be 'turned outward' to serve those interests; and two, the corollary, that professional autonomy is not desirable when it is self-protective or 'turned inward'. The professional principle involved is that teachers should engage authoritatively but openly and collaboratively with a range of partners in the wider community. All EEE Teachers collaborate at least with the parents of their pupils to learn more about their pupils. This collaboration typically takes place through *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* (formal parent meetings) that allow for greater coordination in educating pupils and provide teachers with the support that they need from parents in raising and educating their children.

EEE Teachers believe in helping their pupils to address their personal problems, because this has an impact on their learning and well-being. Although EEE Teachers realise how difficult it is to address social problems in Kyrgyzstan society, with its increasing poverty and growing social inequality, they believe they can make a contribution if they can encourage children to learn. In the example below, Ainura knows the socially disadvantaged children in her class, and she engages their parents to get them to attend classes.

*There is one female pupil in my class whose father drinks and does not work and whose mother sits at home with a little baby. They live in need; one can see by the way this pupil dresses. I asked the parents' committee for help. Parents collected money and helped her. That pupil was so happy and thanked everyone.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Chynara, who is studying for her *kandidat nauk* in developmental psychology, is genuinely interested in exploring relationships between parents and her pupils; she considers this to be essential for a child's well-being. She helps parents learn more about their own children by helping them discover each other more.

*When I meet with parents I try to explore relationships with their children. For example, why does a pupil not study well? What can I do to get a pupil interested in studying? What interests my pupil at the moment? When parents tell their stories about their children I discover a new side of my pupils, and vice versa; parents ask me about their children and learn something new from me about them. It brings me so much joy when they start discovering and learning about each other. It becomes apparent when they find a common language. For example, either a mother comes to me saying that she and her child started to understand each other, or a pupil tells me that his mother appreciated him; I am interested in this.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

All EEE Teachers confirmed, when asked about the role of parents in the education of children, that parents did not engage enough. They think that parents are preoccupied with earning money and have less time with their children. Oleg's statement below is typical of the opinions of all EEE Teachers about the diminishing role of parents in child rearing and the resulting increased burden on teachers in educating and upbringing pupils.

*A lot depends on a family... Unfortunately, the more we develop as an independent state, the less parents care for their children. Parents tell me openly: "Just understand me, I need to feed my child. I need to earn money to make ends meet. I work, upbringing is your and the school's responsibility." I cannot possibly do it for 4-5 hours. However, there are parents who are worried about their children and indeed they help.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

In my observation of *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* (meeting with parents) by EEE Teachers, I noticed that EEE Teachers raise both pedagogy-related and non-pedagogical issues with parents. The EEE Teachers with class tutoring responsibilities conduct a regular *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*, usually four times a year, to update parents on their children's academic achievements and issues related to their upbringing.

At Ainura's *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* of her 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils there were only 13 parents, and three secondary school pupils who substituted for parents on behalf of younger siblings. Ainura was not happy about some parents sending their older siblings to the meeting. The sitting arrangement for parents was in a U-shape so that parents could see each other and face Ainura who stood in front of the class. Ainura opened the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* by greeting everyone with a smile and explained that she organised the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* during the academic year and not during holidays because more of the parents of her 20 pupils would be able to attend. She announced the agenda for the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*, which included three items: (1) academic progress of pupils for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter; (2) reading with children and the role of books; and (3) any other business. She reported on each pupil's academic achievement making recommendations for parents where and how they could help to improve their child's learning. This feedback was provided openly in front of all present as is usually done at the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*. She asked for recommendations from parents about how to approach their children to get them to learn better, affirming that they knew their children better than she did. At the same time, she explained her findings about children based on her observations. For example, she recommended to one parent that she should pay more attention to



mathematics as the daughter needed help in that subject. This engagement by Ainura was highly appreciated by parents who commented that they were happy about the achievements of their children due to Ainura's enormous contribution. They expressed a wish for her to stay as class tutor for their children and teach them in secondary school. Ainura was thankful for their appreciation of her work, but she said that she was unlikely to be able to do it because her health condition did not allow her to overwork.

Ainura turned to discuss the second item about reading with children. She addressed the issue of ensuring there were fiction books for children to read at home and the importance of getting children to read and discuss books with parents. Ainura explained that it was important for enriching their knowledge and improving comprehension of the text, as she notices when she gets the children first to read then relate the story to others. She emphasised the importance of reading with children, not just the availability of books at home. Ainura reported that she had asked all of her pupils about reading with parents and only two out of 20 pupils said they read with their parents. Parents listened attentively and raised the issue of their children spending too much time in front of the TV. In response, Ainura asked other parents to share their experiences with this problem. One parent said that it was up to her, as a parent, to set a schedule for their children for doing homework, watching TV, reading books and going to bed.

Ainura suggested to parents that their children might be interested in joining extracurricular activities available in their village and school, such as dancing, wrestling and drawing. Parents seemed to be interested and responsive to every issue that was raised by Ainura and other parents. Ainura invited parents to engage in dialogue rather than just lecturing them. In a miscellaneous aside, Ainura suggested the possibility of conducting the graduation ceremony and holding a small party for the graduation class at the end of the academic year; she left it to parents to decide without imposing it. She emphasised that some parents were willing but others were not in the past. She suggested all parents talk to the members of the parents' committee about it. If parents decided to have

a party, she would ask the pupils to prepare a short play, as they like to perform. At the end of the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*, Ainura asked if parents had any questions. They simply thanked her again for educating their children. Ainura asked parents to encourage other parents to come to the next *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*. Ainura saw off every parent and talked to a few of the mothers after the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* finished, as illustrated below in Figure 8.4.



Figure 8.4: *Ata-enelerdin chogulushu* at Semetey School

This example reflects the professional principles of both *occupational heteronomy* and *active care for pupils* (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), discussed in Chapter 3 (p.39).

In the *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* organised by Marina in Manas School, several issues were raised, but essentially Marina emphasised the lower level of academic progress by her 8<sup>th</sup> grade in comparison with the previous years. Only six parents were present and parents of the children who had fallen behind were not there. Marina talked about general academic progress in the class because she said that she did not like to provide individual feedback on each pupil in front of other parents, who might feel uncomfortable. She told me later that she thought the typical approach of talking openly about pupil progress and problems was unethical as it broke confidentiality. Her approach was to invite parents to talk to her privately about their children. She considers this approach to be more efficient and more helpful as parents could talk about their issues without any reservations. This approach to break convention in the interests of



maintaining confidentiality is also shared by Klavdiya of Semetey School and Larisa of Kanykey School, as shown below.

*If I talk about the academic progress of my pupils I do it at the end and I do it individually by giving every parent a list with all the grades. The worst a teacher can do is to compare pupils in front of parents. It must not be done. So, I give them my notes and ask them to analyse them, talk to their child and identify where help is needed for a child. A child may need some parents' control or a help from a teacher...*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

*I do not like calling parents to school and I do not like discussing their children in public. They come of their own will and we talk. I recommend to parents that they need to show up at least once to tell me about the individual traits of their child, health problems. It is very useful for me as a teacher.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

At her *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*, Marina went on to talk about the physical and psychological development of her pupils and the importance of their being focused during the next academic year, which would be their school graduation year. She said that there would be sure to be many distractions for pupils at their age of self-assertion, developing feelings and falling in love. She explained to parents that these developments are natural and that they have to understand all these processes in their children and be empathetic towards their children. As a negative example: Marina related a personal experience when she, as a grandparent, went to an *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* for her granddaughter and the teacher started to discuss the personal relationships of her grandchild in front of other parents. Marina encouraged parents to remember their school years when they had their first love and their first affair, which was both personal and important for them. She told parents that she talked to her pupils about the significance of their first love and how important it was to be proud of that moment.

At Marina's *ata-enelerdin chogulushu*, many issues that are not directly related to teaching, such as school uniform or collecting money for renovating their

classrooms<sup>18</sup> were discussed. Marina spent some time explaining what colour of uniform should be worn by children next year. She also raised an issue about renovating her classroom and the school sports hall, which was allocated as her class's responsibility that year. Marina informed parents that she had calculated all costs associated with paints and brushes and it came to 150 soms (USD 2.4) per pupil. She said all children would need masks and gloves and would need to work for 5 days over a week from 8am to 11am as a part of school practicum to get the job done<sup>19</sup>. This example illustrates the pressures that lead to the *deprofessionalisation* of teaching (Evans, 2008; Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) as I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.33-36). It does not appear, though, that an exemplary teacher like Marina is deprofessionalised by having to take up issues relating to uniforms and fixing classrooms. It is clear though, that as these pressures increase, the time available for focusing on teaching will be further constrained. It is also interesting to note in this example the amount of time and thought Marina puts into the upbringing of her pupils, in addition to their academic achievements.

In brief, the EEE Teachers recognise that working with parents is essential for improving pupils' learning, despite the fact that many parents are disengaged from their children's education and upbringing, relying on teachers to do this. Teachers have the responsibility to cover a wide range of issues related to their pupils, including those that are not directly related to pedagogy. The EEE Teachers have significant experience to draw on; they have also developed resilience and strong self-efficacy beliefs over the course of their careers. Teachers without these inner resources, and particularly without adequate support through the schools, risk deprofessionalisation and being distracted from a focus on pedagogy and learning achievement.

<sup>18</sup> It happens every year at the end of the academic year when teachers and parents are obliged to renovate one classroom or a common area in a school.

<sup>19</sup> School practicum for school pupils lasts for up to one month to help teachers to maintain the school during summer holidays.

### Professional ethics

In addition to the seven principles identified by Goodson and Hargreaves, an eighth aspect of enacted professionalism emerges from the responses to my second research question. This involves questions of ethical conduct by teachers and school leaders that are a source of concern for the EEE Teachers. This finding echoes one of MacBeath's (2012:15) criteria of a profession: 'a code of professional conduct'. The EEE Teachers maintain high standards in their work. They prepare for their classes and keep high standards, often, they claim, at the cost of their health. Larisa explains how hard she works.

*In general I undersleep. I try to catch up with my sleep during school holidays. I cannot work less to cause harm to the quality of my work, which I try to keep to high standards.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

EEE Teachers refer to problems in their lives, but they maintain that they try to separate personal problems from professional performance and that this is how they earn respect as a professional, as Gulnur explains.

*Young teachers face the same problems that we faced; for example, difficulties in understanding with a mother-in-law and tribalism among teachers. All these problems seem to be invisible if one conducts lessons and do the work with confidence. For example, teachers do not know you yet, but they respect you if you are professional and do your work. In this case they praise you and support you, they show you who you are indeed. There were such cases in my practice.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

Marina kept her personal problems to herself after losing her husband. She told me that she felt down sometimes at home, but did not bother her son or daughter-in-law with her problems. When she was alone at home in her room she refrained from crying or feeling sorry for herself because she was worried her sugar levels would go up as she is diabetic. In the morning she would be ready for school 'without showing anyone her ups and downs'.

*I can only say it to myself that I feel down and life is difficult. But no matter what, I always come on time to school and I look well-presented in front of my pupils, who observe and learn from me.*

(Marina, Manas School)

The professional ethics of the EEE Teachers appear to be diametrically opposed to the unethical behaviour of some the teachers in their schools, which was partly described in Chapter 7 (pp.123-124). The EEE Teachers consider the bad behaviour of other teachers to be a threat to teacher professionalism and the learning of their pupils. As illustrated by the story of Marina below, she noticed that several teachers in her school do not show up or come late for their classes. Teachers of Kyrgyz language, physics, chemistry and physical culture classes cancelled lessons for Marina's tutoring class without any explanation. In her school teachers could cancel their lessons, which, in some cases would disrupt Marina's lessons if they followed the cancelled lesson. When Marina raised this issue with teachers, she was accused of being a betrayer.

*A spirit of intelligence and decency has totally disappeared in some teachers...I cannot stand such indifference. I stopped admonishing teachers because no one cares, even school leaders... I even started to think that I should probably recommend pupils who really want to study to change schools... Sometimes I feel ashamed that I work in my school.*

(Marina, Manas School)

During my visit to Manas School there was an inspection. In addition to attending lessons, inspectors check the documentation such as portfolios and lesson plans of teachers. Marina mentioned that when the inspection began, all teachers who had not kept documents as part of their everyday responsibility started writing lessons plans for the past month. Marina was approached by the drawing teacher who asked her permission to copy her lesson plans; Marina refused because they teach different subjects. When the inspection was over, teachers who did not document their lessons plans prior to the inspection visit simply continued not writing lesson plans.

*It was a complete whirl. I do not understand why teachers do not do their jobs every day. Why should somebody urge them to do their work? Isn't it difficult to understand that even this documentation and writing reflects their attitude to the work? Such attitude to their work results in a similar pattern among their pupils... Imagine, if all teachers would do their work, we would have totally different children. But in our case our children adapt themselves to the behaviour of these teachers.*

(Marina, Manas School)

According to Ainura, when one of the primary class teachers beat a pupil at Semetey School, all primary class teachers were accused of beating children and it was claimed that this was the practice in every school. Everybody knew who that teacher was, including school leaders; however, that teacher was not reprimanded. Ainura felt disempowered by actions of her school leaders. In her statement below, Ainura indicates that she feels blamed for the unethical behaviour of her colleagues when they are not singled out.

*Our school leaders tend to generalise all primary class teachers if they do something bad. If a young teacher practices corporal punishment in her classroom, all teachers get blamed for it. I feel down when they do this to me. They should rather tell that particular teacher about her behaviour instead of accusing everyone.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Kyrgyzstan legislation makes provision for ethical standards in schools: Article 29 of the Law on Education (GoK, 2006) states, for example, that teachers should not use corporal punishment; Article 15 of the Law on the Status of Teacher (GoK, 2001) states that teachers should respect the honour and dignity of a pupil.

EEE Teachers explain that the unethical behaviour of teachers is directly related to the 'blind eye' school leaders turn to it. They question school leadership in its inability to make the right decisions, to manage teaching and learning processes, and raise conventional ethical standards among teachers, as explained below by Marina.

*Our school administration never mentions shortcomings to any teacher, or a high school pupil. They would like to have peace with everyone. The principle here is 'do not say anything to me and I will not say anything*

*to you'. If I mention unprofessional behaviour to any teacher, I become their enemy. This is bad. Such loyalty leads to negative consequences. Some teachers do not come to their lessons, a school principal beats children. It is disgusting when no one wants to change anything. Teachers must follow labour discipline!*

(Marina, Manas School)

Ainura's view of the consequences of unethical behaviour by some teachers was similar to Marina's: such actions went unpunished. Ainura also considers that ethnicity provides a 'cover' for some teachers, which leads to a lack of accountability.

*Teachers in our school are divided into several groups. Many teachers rely on the kindness and good will of our school principal, who would never accuse a teacher in front of other teachers. Some teachers misuse this and behave in a wrong way but they never acknowledge it, they act as if they are tough because of support from their group. Sometimes I think it happens because of tribalism among Kyrgyz-speaking teachers; unfortunately, this makes it more vivid. When we analyse our work, some teachers clearly see their mistakes, but they try to hide it because they feel they would be backed by their group.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

Oleg offers the example of school leaders who take advantage of the lack of funding for schools to compromise ethical norms. In Kanykey School, which is a public school in the capital Bishkek for which children compete to enter, priority is given to children of parents who 'contribute voluntarily' to the school. The statement of Oleg below suggests the depth of the problem of spread of unethical 'norms' among school leaders and teachers.

*Our school principal has to maintain and renovate the school and he needs to involve sponsors to do it. Very often sponsors are those parents whose children did not enter the school due to poor entry results...So, some parents 'voluntarily' install plastic windows in the classrooms or renovate the whole corridor in the school. Of course, money does not go to the school principal's pocket and everything is done for the school. However, in the end it counts as a bribe. The child of that parent enters the school and his level of knowledge is very poor. We get more and more of such pupils. And pupils who study well and show good results remain out of school because their parents have less money or are not able to contribute.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

In brief, the EEE Teachers recognise the importance of addressing increasing unethical behaviour by some of their colleagues and school leaders. The decline of ethical norms spreads as 'a school culture of impunity' confirming the importance of 'a code of professional conduct' that MacBeath (2012:15) identifies as a criterion of professionalism, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (p.40).

### **Contextual factors affecting professionalism**

In addition to the eight aspects of professionalism discussed earlier, the context in which EEE Teachers find themselves fundamentally shapes the way EEE Teachers enact their professional practice. Several contextual factors affect the professionalism of the EEE Teachers. EEE Teachers consistently repeated the need for policy makers and school administration to create a supportive environment. The EEE Teachers persevered in adversity but they recognise that a supportive environment is necessary to enable newer generations of teachers to stay in the profession. As shown below, Aigul recognised the factors that contribute to the creation of a supportive environment for teachers.

*In order for teachers to be able to work better, to teach better, the most important factor to be addressed is a supportive school environment. Second of all, family support. Then, parents' participation. Only when these factors interact, is a teacher able to perform. If one of the conditions is not there for a teacher, a teacher is not able to perform efficiently.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

In this section I look at the contextual factors in the immediate school environment and the wider environment that affect the professionalism of the EEE Teachers.

### ***The school environment***

In three focus group discussions in Kanykey, Manas and Semetey Schools, teachers complained that they have more than 35 pupils in each classroom. Such *overcrowded classes* are typical for middle and large-sized schools in

Kyrgyzstan, making teaching challenging for some of the EEE Teachers, as shown below.

*How can one teach in a class with 43 pupils? No wonder the quality of education suffers.*

(Teachers, Semetey School)

Some of the EEE Teachers reflected on how *administrative issues became priorities over matters of pedagogy* by school leaders. For example, solutions to overcrowded classes are found at the expense of space for collaborative work of teachers, as illustrated by the story of Oleg below.

*School, as an organisation, is abandoned by everyone and that is the problem. It has to survive, and things such as professional growth and exchange of experiences between teachers are forgotten. Where can I meet with other teachers to share our experiences? There must be a special room for it. In all schools there is lack of classrooms. They [school leaders] transform storage rooms into classrooms to accommodate more pupils. So, creative approaches in teaching and professional growth are the least prioritised under such circumstances in school. The survival is an absolute priority.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

The worsening working conditions within the classroom are frequently mentioned by teachers across the four schools. Teachers refer to the poor *materialdyk-technikalyk baza* (materials and equipment) for their teaching, which lacks textbooks and other materials. Observations of the lessons of the EEE Teachers revealed that several pupils had to share one old textbook during class, as illustrated below in Figure 8.5.



Figure 8.5: Old history textbook published in 1991

As shown earlier, from Marina's *ata-enelerdin chogulushu* (pp.171-173), she was expected to renovate a public school without financial support from the state and, thus, had to collect money from parents. This remains as a legacy of Soviet schools and not only *deprofessionalises* the EEE Teachers but also positions them as money collectors in the eyes of parents. They have become part of a relentless circle of money collection that is hugely detrimental to their professional image. This is one of the major reasons for the public loss of faith in teachers and the accusations of corruption that are often levelled against them, as illustrated by the accounts from teachers in Seitek School.

*When we say that we work at school, we are told by people – you work in school, where money is collected. Teachers should not be burdened with these financial responsibilities. It [money collection] must be done by a specially assigned person, but not by a teacher. Teachers should be left alone and we will work wonderfully.*

(Teachers, Seitek School)

Similarly to Marina, Gulnur of Seitek School, as illustrated below in Figure 8.6, had to renovate her classroom by whitewashing the walls and painting the floor and desks at the end of long academic year.



Figure 8.6: Teachers in Seitek School renovate their classrooms

There was *professional support* for some of the EEE Teachers from their colleagues who wished to be more friendly and helpful. During observation of lessons by the deputy principal, Oleg was dissatisfied with the mode of collaboration and found it unhelpful for his professional growth.

*Observation of my lessons by other teachers occurs with the purpose to criticise and to judge. I ever hardly hear good recommendations about improving my lessons. She [deputy principal] comes in sometimes without knocking, interrupts my lesson, sits down and observes. At the end of the lesson she tells me that she would conduct my lesson differently. I understand that that our relationships are not the best, but she needs to support me, rather than admonish.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

I also noticed that in Manas, Semetey and Kanykey Schools there was a certain level of *hostility and lack of trust among teachers*. Teachers had their own camps, which did not encourage professional collaboration. During my interview with Ainura of Semetey School, she referred to the anonymous article written by teachers of her school in a district newspaper complaining about their school principal; that she occupied the post of a school principal and was temporarily performing the role of a local government head, as illustrated below in Figure 8.7. The school principal later gathered all teachers and asked politely for teachers to address her directly if there were any problems without 'stabbing from the back'.



Figure 8.7: Anonymous article against the school principal

Similarly Oleg and Marina mentioned that instead of uniting and working together, there were intrigues among the teaching staff which undermine trust among teachers in their schools.

*There is no group work in our school. Female teachers talk about each other and form some groups.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

*Younger teachers isolate us and never invite us to their parties or celebrations.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Some of the EEE Teachers consider these intrigues and lack of trust as a serious threat to the supportive environment in their schools. As a result of the lack of supportive environment, some EEE Teachers look for jobs in other schools. Oleg departed from Kanykey School and moved to a private school. Marina finds it increasingly difficult to work in Manas School and keeps thinking that she needs to move to another school. These examples raise the importance of establishing trust among teachers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), which I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.63-64).

### *The wider environment affecting teaching professionalism*

The EEE Teachers and their colleagues referred to broader issues beyond the school environment that have profound effects on their ability to function as professionals. These factors reflected the social and political context in which teachers live.

Some of the EEE Teachers faced many *discrepancies in teaching materials* that were developed for them. Chynara expressed the need for greater collaboration with people who develop those materials, as shown below. This also reflects the importance of 'practicalising theoretical knowledge' (Tsui, 2009), as discussed in Chapter 3 (p.48), and creating 'teacher-centred literature' (Huberman, 1985) and 'practical knowledge' (Frost, 2012) (see Chapter 4, p.62).

*I want theoretical people, who develop programmes and textbooks for schools, to trial what they developed in schools. We clearly see that there is a gap between theory and practice in school. I would like them to remember that teachers implement what they write and, moreover, they need to think about pupils.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

With a newly introduced subject curriculum, the EEE Teachers referred to the lack of professional support for teachers. In some cases, such as that illustrated below, Oleg complained that teachers are left alone to solve the problems in implementing a newly introduced curriculum without proper guidance.

*Absolutely no one helps teachers to understand how to teach the same number of themes in a shortened period of time. With no guidelines and no textbooks a teacher has to find a way out without anybody's help.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg, who teaches modern history, could not find an expert in the subject at the local department of education. Instead he kept in touch with a group of experienced history teachers to discuss the issues, as shown below.

*It is difficult to find a person or an organisation where I can get professional support. All professionals left long ago. So, I keep in touch by phone with experienced teachers of history, with whom I used to*



*communicate on a regular basis earlier. But more frequently they learn from me.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg solved the issue of shortened hours by *collaborating with his experienced colleagues* over the phone, discussing which themes had to be shortened and which had to remain the same. However, each history teacher came up with their own solution to the problem. When a group of teachers, including Oleg, asked the local department of education to provide them with a new syllabus which all teachers would follow, they were told that the request was sent to the MoES. Oleg mentioned a history expert at the local department of education, who could have organised history teachers to develop a new syllabus based on their experience, but she was not interested. Up to now, the new syllabus has not been received by history teachers, according to Oleg. Oleg also referred to the lack of monitoring by the MoES of how teachers taught history according to newly introduced subject curriculum. According to Oleg, many history teachers, who were educated in the USSR, still teach Marx and Lenin in detail to introduce the communist movement because it is convenient for them as they were educated this way, and no one monitors them.

Some of the EEE Teachers also admitted that their practice is full of paperwork, which is given priority over teaching by school leaders during external inspections. Marina and her colleagues in the focus group in Manas School emphasised all together that increasing paperwork ruled their work, as shown below.

*We are fed up with this bureaucracy. Paperwork and reports pressurise us. We do not understand who needs them. We do not know who we are writing these for... But if one does not write them, this teacher is accused of not working... We have no time left to work with our classes [as class tutors]. Before, we could stay after lessons to talk to our pupils - now we stay because we have to fill out different forms and papers.*

(Teachers, Manas School)

Some of the EEE Teachers recognise that a *bureaucratic approach to managing schools* becomes detrimental to the creativity of teachers and influences, as illustrated by the story of Chynara below.

*There is some change in psychological mood in school. Everything is assessed according to some scale. Everything is constrained into some frame. I think that we, as human beings, must be above it. Creativity is what we need to think about as human beings. We can share it with our children and our pupils. Before teachers felt it and we had spark in our eyes. Unfortunately, it becomes rare these days. I would not say, though, that we totally lost it.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

The method of conducting external inspections as they are now is quite rigid and unnecessary, according to some of the EEE Teachers. Marina complained about the school principal collecting money from teachers to prepare food and cover travel costs for inspectors from the district department of education to assess their school and teachers. Marina was sure of the poor quality of help provided by the inspectors and the mood that they created in school prior to their arrival because all teachers started to write reports and collect papers instead of working as usual. Chynara of Seitek also critically referred to the inspectors and the nature of such inspections, as shown below.

*If a teacher finishes her lesson within 35 or 40 minutes instead of the set 45 minutes, it is considered a big error in teaching. They say one is not fulfilled as a teacher. They say it is a big mistake. I am very cautious about what they say. I think they kill something in us as teachers. When teachers try to explain their behaviour they interrupt you and they say they do not need our advice.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Adequate remuneration was raised in all four focus group discussions. Teachers believed that their innovation, passion and the quality of their teaching were constrained by the low salaries they receive, as illustrated by the accounts from teachers in Kanykey School below.

*If our salaries were appropriate, we would spend more time on preparing for lessons and improving our professionalism. Instead we take as many*



*teaching hours as we possibly can just to earn enough [i.e. second jobs outside of school] to make a living.*

(Teachers, Kanykey School)

For some teachers, the low salary was a signifier of their *low social status in society*. These perceptions were compounded by their sense that teachers did not benefit much from the social packages that were guaranteed by the Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic (GoK, 2006).

*Young teachers are entitled to a piece of land when they join school. Instead they have to pay half of their salary to rent a house! And after that, how can you keep a young teacher in school?*

(Teachers, Seitek School)

The *declining participation of parents* in educating their children showed how some of the EEE Teachers are left alone in dealing with the problems of their pupils, as illustrated by the story of Oleg below.

*Parents are preoccupied with earning for living and they do not have time for their children. Some parents say they leave home when a child is in bed, and come back home when the child has fallen asleep. Some parents have only an 8-year school education and are not able to help their children to do the homework.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Teachers in focus group discussions in Kanykey, Semetey and Seitek Schools were also greatly concerned about the portrait of teachers that was painted by the mass media and by its reflection of social attitudes. Teachers are continuously accused of poor teaching but adequate working conditions for quality teaching are not provided (Sharshekeeva, 2015). President Atambaev, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> national congress of teachers (2015), spoke of teachers who teach poorly or miss their classes as ‘serving time’. The articles from *The Vechernii Bishkek* newspaper ([www.vb.kg](http://www.vb.kg)) and *The 24.kg*, an on-line news agency ([www.24.kg](http://www.24.kg)) that I reviewed, are all about school staff who collect money from pupils and parents, as also illustrated earlier in Chapter 8 (p.177 and p.180). Examples of titles for such articles are commonly of this ilk: ‘Distinguished slaveholder’ [about a school principal] (Kasybekov, 2012), or ‘Teachers are sucked down in the bog of corruption’ (Miroshnik, 2012).

*[Teachers] are sucked down in the bog of corruption and we need to solve this problem. It comes to a point when, in front of other pupils, a teacher tells a pupil that his father did not pay and that is why he expels him from the classroom.*

(Miroshnik, 2012)

The poor public image seriously demoralises teachers, undermining their willingness to continue teaching and profoundly affecting their professional practice.

The contextual factors that the EEE Teachers identified as affecting their professionalism and needing to be addressed can be summarised as follows:

- In-school support
  - overcrowded classrooms
  - pedagogy not prioritised by school leaders
  - poor materials and equipment for teaching
  - increased administrative load for teachers
  - lack of in-school professional support
  - lack of trust among teachers
- The wider environment
  - overly theoretical textbooks
  - lack of professional support in implementing a new subject curriculum
  - increasing the bureaucratic approach in managing schools
  - unhelpful external inspections
  - inadequate remuneration of teachers and low social status
  - the increasing disengagement of parents
  - the negative image of teachers as a result of persisting deprofessionalisation

## Summary

I describe two insights by Niyozov (2011) in my discussion, in Chapter 3 (p.41), on the relevance and appropriateness of Western approaches in the post-Socialist space: first, the importance of maintaining a critical approach to Western notions of professionalism in Kyrgyzstan; second, not to import a single set of criteria of professionalism that are derived elsewhere. The seven principles of new professionalism that Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) identify feature strongly in this chapter, along with certain of the criteria of the teaching profession identified by MacBeath (2012) and Niyozov (2011). My analysis did not set out to establish the relevance of Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) principles of new professionalism or MacBeath's (2012) or Niyozov's (2011) criteria of the teaching profession for Kyrgyzstan: the principles of new professionalism (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), however, did offer a helpful framework for the findings as they emerged. There are two probable reasons for this: the first is that the principles of new professionalism (*ibid.*) and MacBeath's (2012) and Niyozov's (2011) criteria of the teaching profession are generic and, to some degree, universal; the second is that my thinking and expectations were shaped as I read the literature. The truth probably lies in some combination of the two. The principles of new professionalism and criteria of the teaching profession, or themes, do overlap, which suggests a degree of universality; for example, Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) 'exercise discretionary judgement' addresses similar concerns to Niyozov's (2011) 'objective knowledge base' and DeYoung's (2007) 'knowledge base problems'; MacBeath's (2012) 'public service and altruism' resonates with Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) 'active care for pupils'; and Goodson and Hargreaves' (*ibid.*) 'body of inaccessible skills that are relatively inaccessible to the uninitiated' overlaps with MacBeath's (2012) 'inaccessible and indeterminacy (sic) body of knowledge'. However, I do not identify the eight features of enacted professionalism I describe in this chapter as an exhaustive list of principles for the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan, nor do they provide an adequate list of criteria of professional practice.

This chapter describes eight areas in which the EEE Teachers enact their professionalism, as follows:

- discretionary judgement around curriculum and content
- active care for pupils
- the social and moral purpose of pedagogy
- professional knowledge
- continuous learning
- collaborative cultures of help and support
- partnerships with parents
- professional ethics

Also, MacBeath's (2012) compelling list of 12 criteria of the teaching profession and Niyozov's five criteria of the teaching profession (2011) appear in Chapter 7 in my discussion of the findings on EEE Teachers' commitment to teaching, as follows below:

- university degree (Niyozov, 2011) or high quality pre-service academic and professional preparation (MacBeath, 2012) (see Chapter 7, pp.116-117),
- availability of induction (MacBeath, 2012) (see Chapter 7, pp.117-118),
- social status (Niyozov, 2011) (see Chapter 7, pp.114-115)

I discuss other criteria of the teaching profession including 'professional association', 'self-regulation' (MacBeath, 2012), and 'membership of professional organisations' (Niyozov, 2011) in the chapters that follow.

In Chapter 9, I discuss how the EEE Teachers interact with other teachers to contribute to improving teaching in their schools.

## Chapter 9: EEE Teachers and social interactions

This chapter presents the findings in relation to how EEE Teachers influence other teachers and how this contributes to improving teaching and learning in their schools. While the previous chapter looked at the 'collaborative cultures' (pp.161-167) that are established formally as a part of professional practice, this chapter explores informal interactions between teachers that reflect three ideas that emerge in the literature on teacher professionalism: *non-positional teacher leadership* (Frost *et al.*, 2011), *social capital* (Coleman, 1998; Hargreaves, 2001; Leana, 2011), and *collective learning* (Stoll *et al.*, 2006). These ideas are reflected in the social interactions (Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Min Kim & Frank, 2012) between EEE Teachers and their colleagues. It is these that provide the structure for this chapter.

My discussion in this chapter starts with an exploration of various initiatives by the EEE Teachers that address the improvement of pupils' learning and matters of *tarbiya* (upbringing). I examine how these initiatives involve other teachers through the social interactions between the EEE Teachers and other teachers, as well as interactions between other teachers in the schools. This prompts a consideration of the extent to which the initiatives of the EEE Teachers extend beyond individual practice to influence and include other teachers, thus strengthening collaboration and collective learning in the schools. I identify the contextual factors that affect EEE Teachers' abilities to exercise leadership that improves teaching and learning, and engages other teachers. These involve the conditions created by school leaders and education authorities, and the consequences for collective learning in the schools.

The findings in this Chapter have implications for my conceptual approach in Figure 5.1 (p.70). EEE Teachers' continuing commitment and professional practice could be shared or learnt by other teachers, depending on the degree of their engagement and collaboration between EEE Teachers and their colleagues.

## Taking initiative and leading innovation

In this section I discuss the findings related to how the EEE Teachers initiate their own ideas outside their designated leadership roles in the schools. The idea of non-positional teacher leadership (Frost, 2010) was used to examine how the EEE Teachers exercise their leadership; to what extent methodologies used are strategic and deliberate to engage other teachers in these initiatives. In the Kyrgyzstan context the idea of teacher leadership is associated with formal management in schools (Imankulova *et al.*, 2011). For this reason, the EEE Teachers were not asked about leadership as such, i.e. how they formulate and understand it; rather they were asked to talk about projects or actions they initiated themselves, and that they were not formally requested to undertake.

The areas in which the EEE Teachers lead their own initiatives are related to educating and upbringing their pupils, but are aimed at improving their pupils' learning.

### *Marina's initiative on mentoring a novice teacher*

As I describe earlier in Chapter 7 (pp.117-118), support for the EEE Teachers during their induction as teachers provided an important impetus for shaping their commitment at the beginning of their careers. This support was provided by their more experienced colleagues when they were novice teachers. The EEE Teachers describe the contemporary system in which novice teachers are left without guidance and support from experienced colleagues. Marina and her colleagues in Manas School related their experiences as novice teachers during the focus group discussion, reflecting on how important it was to have professional assistance from established teachers, who provided them with timely support and helped to shape their professional practice. They identified this as an area for improvement for Manas School, as shown below. This current systemic shortcoming is directly related to the current problem of teacher retention in Kyrgyzstan.

*When a novice teacher comes to school, she has to be surrounded by care and warmth if she is to get interested in a teacher's work and stay at school. It is as necessary as a cup of coffee in the morning. As far as I*

*remember, when I joined school I received so much attention from the school principal. I learnt to care and I still follow it. Nowadays, all teachers are overloaded with paper filing and writing reports, and are mired in bureaucracy. We have become indifferent about novice teachers and welcoming them. If a novice teacher approaches an experienced teacher, that teacher may explain what to do. If a novice teacher does not approach an experienced teacher, no one will approach her. Experienced teachers think: 'I learnt it all by myself, she can do the same'.*

(Marina, Manas School)

*Novice teachers need professional help. Maybe that is why after three years, many cannot take it anymore and leave.*

(Teachers, Manas School)

Marina initiated informal *nasaatchylyk* (mentoring) for Aminat, a novice English language teacher, who also happened to be her former pupil. They were not assigned to each other formally as mentor and mentee, but the mentoring relationship turned into a long-term professional collaboration between the two teachers. Marina took a lead and helped Aminat when she was on the edge of dropping out, as was mentioned briefly in Chapter 7 (p.119). Since then Aminat turns to Marina for help if she has any questions. Below, Aminat reflects on Marina's qualities as a teacher.

*Marina helps all teachers, not only me. She is very friendly whoever comes to her for help. In our school we have teachers who reject helping other teachers or would say that they do not know the answer. Marina is a totally different case: she is always ready to help in anything, she listens to people and provides guidance in class tutoring, documentation writing etc.*

(Aminat, Manas School)

Marina reflects on how their relationship began. She noticed in a school corridor that Aminat looked disappointed and approached her to inquire what was wrong. Aminat was emotional and started to cry, saying that she wanted to drop out and run away from everything. Marina calmed her down, took her into her classroom and listened to her problems. It turned out that Aminat was struggling with a few issues: in particular, she had a problem being a class tutor and she felt she was not getting any support from other teachers. Marina suggested that Aminat should ask her for help where she felt she lacked knowledge and experience. The

advice Marina provided about class tutoring was that Aminat should treat pupils as if they were her children. Marina showed Aminat that it was important to stay after lessons and gather all pupils to ask them how things are going. Aminat learnt from observing Marina working with her class.

As a result, Aminat and her pupils became closer and established an understanding. Her class recently won a school competition. Aminat makes regular presentations on class tutoring during the *pedagogicalyk keneshme*, and is recognised as the most successful novice teacher in Manas School.

Marina demonstrates qualities and behaviours that are features of *non-positional leadership* (Frost, 2010; Fröst *et al.*, 2011), as discussed in Chapter 4 (pp.66-67). She demonstrates responsibility in her recognition that the lack of support for novice teachers in her school leads to drop out and a low retention of new teachers; she committed herself to mentoring a new teacher without being formally requested to do so. However, while Marina influenced a teacher to remain in the profession and helped her to become one of the best novice teachers in the school, her actions are not deliberate; rather they are spontaneous and do not involve further strategic actions to lead other teachers. She does not cultivate this method among other teachers in school.

For Aminat, a novice teacher, informal mentoring provided an important learning opportunity. Aminat learnt a great deal from Marina's experience in teaching and *vospitanie*. This confirms findings elsewhere that mentoring leads to *enhanced competence* (Bush, Coleman, Wall & West-Burnham, 1996), which I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.63). This example also suggests that experienced teachers like Marina are an important source of support for novice teachers and a demonstration of key aspects of professionalism (Griffiths, 2007 in Day & Gu, 2009), as discussed in Chapter 2 (pp.27-28). For Marina it was rather a realisation that helping novice teachers should be a greater priority in her school, where mentoring is neglected.

The focus group discussion in Manas School confirms that Marina was the only teacher who has taken the initiative to help novice teachers. She constantly

reminds all teachers at the *pedagogical keneshme* in Manas School that 'her doors are always open' if teachers have any professional questions and need her support. This suggests that Marina prioritises knowledge sharing over 'norms of privacy' (Little & McLaughlin, 1993), as I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.62). It does not suggest, of course, that other teachers are not open to collaboration or sharing experiences. It shows that while teachers may agree this is an area that needs improvement, only Marina takes actual steps to improve the situation.

The formal mentoring schemes do not necessarily contribute to making novice teachers want to remain in teaching. Aminat's experience suggests that professional encouragement is provided through informal arrangements that are based on mutual trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) as discussed in Chapter 4 (p.56). Marina believes that there should be interactions between teachers and school leaders to support novice teachers and influence school culture; echoing earlier findings by Showers and Joyce (1996) and Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010) (see Chapter 4, p.64 and p.56).

*School leaders also should care about novice teachers and guide them through their first three years. The reason we became indifferent is because every teacher sits in her own corner.*

(Marina, Manas School)

This statement also reflects earlier research by Hargreaves and Fullan (2000), which I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.63), confirming that mentoring is unlikely to contribute to improving schools unless it is an integrated part of the practice in the school.

#### ***Ainura's, Marina's and Larisa's initiatives on transition***

Ainura, Marina and Larisa pay careful attention to the transition from primary school to secondary school, trying to find ways to make the transition easier for their pupils. As I explain earlier in Chapter 5 (p.76), each of the four schools are combined primary and secondary schools, but are referred to in Kyrgyz as *orto mektepter* (secondary schools). I mentioned in Chapter 8 (p.150) that Ainura, a primary class teacher at Semetey School, attempts to preserve a child-centred learning environment for her primary class pupils by persuading the school

principal to maintain a child-centred style of teaching for her pupils in the secondary school section at Semetey School by allocating a teacher who practices a child-centred methodology.

Ainura had taught her primary class for 4 years and continued as their class tutor and Kyrgyz language teacher up to their graduation from 9<sup>th</sup> grade. She emphasises that the academic achievements of her pupils were quite high at primary level and she was proud that she had managed to maintain their interest in education until the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. She decided to keep to teaching primary classes because her health was not too good. Ainura believes that providing active support to pupils throughout their school years helps them to be better academically.

Larisa, who is at Kanykey School approaches transition differently. Her emphasis is on a consistent quality of teaching mathematics in all grades. Larisa teaches mathematics in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades; it is important for her that mathematics teachers of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades ensure that the grounding is solid and the teaching is commensurate. At the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department meeting) of mathematics teachers, Larisa initiated a discussion with other teachers to encourage them to share their difficulties in teaching mathematics. Larisa and other teachers, who teach in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, raised a problem about the different approaches to solving mathematical problems. These comments were shared with the teachers of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grades to make sure that more attention was given to certain problems and pupils' gaps in knowledge. Larisa mentioned that it was important not to confuse pupils with different approaches to solving mathematical problems from one year to the next. Teachers agreed that consolidating key requirements and approaches to solving mathematics problems was necessary. Similar discussions also took place with teachers of the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. This example demonstrates a collective effort to improve teaching mathematics across grades, reflecting *community*, an aspect of *community of practice* noted by Wenger (2004) (see Chapter 4, p.59), which involves interaction between teachers to share knowledge.

Larisa also talks to the previous teachers of her 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupils about their personal interests, social background and styles of learning.

*I talk to teachers about pupils... I am interested in learning about their laziness, diligence, efficiency, their previous difficulties with learning and the reasons for it. I try to understand the reasons why certain pupils are struggling to study in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade: is it related to their vulnerability and sensitivity? Some pupils get upset easily if I say something, others require a more strict approach, etc. Their previous teachers tell me about them and this helps me to understand. I am also interested in learning what mathematics means to them as a subject. Do they show more or less interest in learning mathematics now than in the past? Sometimes teachers refer to circumstances in a pupil's family – divorce of parents or other tragic developments – so that I can pay more attention to these pupils.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Similarly, Marina, who teaches Russian language in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in Manas School, the first grade of high school classes, took the initiative to attend the classes of her colleagues who teach in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school. Marina believes that learning about her future pupils and seeing the teaching methods that were used in the last class of primary school will help her adjust her teaching to the needs of her future pupils. Marina considers the transition between primary and secondary school to be very important.

*I need to know the level of knowledge of Russian language of the 4<sup>th</sup> graders: their ability to read and analyse. Based on my observations of their weaknesses in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I identify the areas where I will need to pay more attention in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Marina thinks that language presents particular challenges for transition. When she started teaching Russian language to Kyrgyz-speaking classes, her lack of knowledge of Kyrgyz made it difficult. She asked a Kyrgyz language teacher if she could observe her lessons, and have a look at the lesson plans and calendar plans. Marina realised that her lesson structures were different. The differences in teaching helped Marina to adjust better to the needs and particularities of her pupils in the Kyrgyz-speaking class.

*My pupils in the Kyrgyz-speaking class complete as many tasks as they need to earn a mark. They never leave a lesson without getting a mark. It is a prestige for them to get a mark... When I teach in the Kyrgyz-speaking class I can see the difference.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Thus, Ainura, Larisa and Marina initiate actions to improve their teaching and their pupils' learning, particularly in relation to the transition from primary to secondary school. This recalls Bolam *et al.*'s (2005) and Stoll *et al.*'s (2006) 'enhancing pupil learning', which is one of the four key domains of PLCs I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.60-62). It also demonstrates two features of Wenger's (1998) community of practice: *domain* and *community*, which I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.59), as well as features of *non-positional teacher leadership* (Frost, 2010): such as initiating and leading their own initiatives, improving their own classrooms and learning from their colleagues, which I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.66-67). However, their impact at the level of the school is limited; in Ainura's and Marina's cases it does not reach beyond their own classrooms. To be effective, transition planning needs to be strategic; it should effect deliberate collaborative action by all teachers in school. By contrast, the initiatives undertaken by the EEE Teachers are random having little cumulative effect on the school.

The following initiatives by Chynara, Marina and Ainura are related to *vospitanie*. They believe that in order to help their pupils learn better they also need to address non-academic matters. These three EEE Teachers are also class tutors, although, as shown below, their initiatives extend beyond what might be considered the typical responsibilities of a class tutor.

#### *Chynara's initiative*

Chynara's initiative relates an incident, which, while not about teaching, affected the learning of her pupils. Her male 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils started missing classes; they were trying to escape encounters with her and they did not prepare for the

lessons. Chynara found out that they were victims of *rakeet*<sup>20</sup> (extortion) by 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Other teachers and parents were simply accusing them for their poor performance. Chynara was class tutor in charge of upbringing of her 9<sup>th</sup> graders; even though she could have filed a formal complaint with the police to get them to deal with the situation, she thought that it might be harmful for her pupils if the investigation goes in the wrong direction. It was difficult for Chynara to make this decision because her pupils had little support: everyone simply accused them. She was also not entirely sure that she was doing the right thing by listening to her pupils and taking their side.

Chynara decided to initiate her own investigation. Fortunately, her husband worked in the police and she asked him to help her to talk to her pupils. Chynara asked her husband to deal with it delicately. He agreed with Chynara's decision to support her pupils and investigate everything carefully. Chynara invited all parents and representatives of the juvenile police for a discussion, after which the 11<sup>th</sup> graders were found guilty of extortion. The attendance of her pupils improved and the extortions stopped, but the 11<sup>th</sup> graders started to beat up her pupils outside of school, in the village. Chynara gathered her male pupils and recommended that they walk in groups to protect themselves. Her pupils walked home in a group of 10-20 pupils. Chynara reflects on her actions.

*It turned out that their strength was in unity. They are mostly all tertiary students now and as a token of gratitude, they still come and visit me in school. They tell me that as a result of my actions, they got better acquainted with each other and felt they learnt about me too. They tell me confidential stories, as they are sure that I will not tell anyone. They trust me and I trust them.*

(Chynara, Seitek School)

Chynara's idea to address her pupils' difficult problem in a non-conventional way by engaging external partners such as police resonates with findings in earlier research by Mitchell and Sackney (2007) (see Chapter 4, p.61). Her initiative presents a clear example of Hoyle's (1974) extended professionalism, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.42-44). This example demonstrates how

<sup>20</sup> *Rakeet* is a term used in Kyrgyzstan schools to characterise extortion in schools by elder grade pupils.

important it is to *connect emotionally* with pupils to understand their problems; it resonates also with research by Little and McLaughlin (1993) and Day (2009) that I discuss in Chapter 4 (p. 60). Chynara acted without the support of other teachers or school leaders. As courageous as this action was, it demonstrates that the knowledge and experience she gained remained hers alone: it did not involve other teachers, and the school did not learn anything as an institution.

#### *Marina's and Ainura's initiatives on working with parents*

I described Marina's individualised way (see Chapter 8, pp.171-172) of working with her class's pupils and their parents, which is further illustrated in the example of an incident with Almaz, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade male pupil of hers. At the assembly of all pupils at Manas school, Marina noticed the smell of alcohol from Almaz's direction. She noticed that Almaz was unusually relaxed and she inquired how he was feeling. He responded that he did indeed feel well. Marina remembered that Almaz had asthma, like her own son, and she got worried. Marina knew from her experience that at his age teenagers try smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, but she decided not to inform his parents. The next day Marina asked him to see her privately and decided to ask him again whether he had drunk alcohol the previous day: he responded that he had not. Marina's style is not to lecture pupils; she simply asked him directly whether he knew that alcohol could be bad for his asthma. Almaz responded that he knew about his health condition but he did not drink. Marina then asked him kindly and directly to tell the truth, and he confessed that he had tried some alcohol with his friends. Almaz said that he did not feel well when he got home and he had been sick. Marina was unsure as to whether she should inform his parents about the case. 'What would happen if Almaz decides to try again?' was the question that rang in her mind, and it did not make her calm.

Almaz's father, who works in local government, came to school to see the principal on another matter and accidentally ran into Marina. He asked her about Almaz's academic results. Marina was still hesitant to inform him about his son's adventure with alcohol.



- Almaz's results are good. You may come with me to the class if you want to see his marks and his extracurricular activities in the class...

- Great. How did you celebrate New Year, Marina?

- Very well! Thank you... Did you give Almaz some alcohol on New Year to try, by any chance?

- No, never. My wife and I do not drink alcohol at all. Why are you asking?

- You know, I wanted to ... Can you please talk to Almaz? It seemed to me that he tried some wine or champagne. Will you talk to him?

- Why? Did you smell alcohol on him?

- I did not. But he was behaving strangely. Will you talk to him?

- I got it, Marina. I will.

Marina was absolutely sure that Almaz's father would not be violent or aggressive with his son because she knew him to be an intelligent and decent man. Almaz's elder sister, Azamat, a former pupil of Marina's, visited her few days later to thank her on her father's behalf. Azamat said that her father had talked to Almaz in a very calm and nice way and she gave Marina a personal New Year card in which their father expressed his thanks.

This example of working sensitively with parents shows that Marina cares about her pupils and instinctively understands what is the best approach. Her ability to identify a problematic area in the upbringing of her pupils and help them to deal with it reflects what Sukhomlinsky (1981) called *lubov k detyam* (love for children), which I discuss in Chapter 2 (p.30). She builds her relationships with pupils through trying to understand their problems, reminiscent of Little and McLaughlin (1993) and Day's (2009) notion of 'connecting emotionally' with pupils that I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.60). She is a strong opponent of the practice of calling parents to the school whenever there is an incident, as many teachers in her school do. She does not think it is right to expect that parents should solve minor behavioural problems in classroom behaviour. Her initiative reflects some features of *non-positional teacher leadership* (Frost, 2010), but it lacks the

strategic step of deliberately cultivating an improved way of working with parents in the whole school, or among her colleagues.

Ainura's approach to working with parents is different from Marina's. Ainura had received comments from parents that their children did all the homework she gave, but their marks did not seem to be improving. To address this issue, Ainura invited parents to observe her lesson; she felt this would make the process more transparent and help parents learn about their children's learning. Ainura organised a schedule for parents to attend her lessons. The goal of the initiative was not to get parents to observe her teaching, it was rather to give parents an opportunity to observe how their children learn so they could help them learn at home. Ainura especially encouraged parents of children in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades to observe their children learn. The parents who attended learnt a lot about their children. It also helped Ainura establish trust and empathy with parents and it encouraged parents to talk to their children about their learning.

Both Marina and Ainura extend professionalism beyond the school in the ways they engage parents to participate in the upbringing of their children, echoing findings by Mitchell and Sackney (2007) in Canada and confirming that *establishing partnerships with parents* is an important element in building a PLC (Stoll *et al.*, 2005) as I discuss earlier in Chapter 4 (pp.61-62). The fact that certain EEE Teachers establish their partnership with parents in non-orthodox ways indicates elements of *non-positional teacher leadership* (Frost, 2010). However, the impact of their initiatives is limited to their classes and pupils only, suggesting that their actions lack 'appropriate strategies' to 'deliberately cultivate' knowledge building within their schools, as emphasised by Frost (2010) (see Chapter 4, pp.66-67).

In the next section I explore the nature of social interactions between EEE Teachers and other teachers to understand how the initiatives of EEE Teachers may lead to a greater impact on their colleagues and thus foster 'collective learning' (Stoll *et al.*, 2006) in their schools.

### The nature of social interactions

In this section I employ the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988) to discuss the nature of social interactions between teachers. I discuss the role of trust and a shared goal in maintaining the quality of social interactions between teachers, and I explore the existing patterns of interactions.

The EEE Teachers interact with one another and their colleagues mostly in formal meetings such as the *usulduk keneshme* (subject department meeting) and the *pedagogicalyk keneshme* (all school teachers' meeting), as I explain earlier in Chapter 8 (pp.161-165). These are typically structured formal gatherings that provide teachers with opportunities for professional interactions within the school, across the subjects and grades they teach. Individual interactions between teachers occur in both formal and informal settings. *Nasaatchylyk* (mentoring) is usually a formal arrangement between an experienced and a novice teacher, as I explain in Chapter 8 (pp.166-167). Informal interactions also more typically occur when other teachers have questions and turn to the EEE Teachers for advice, although Marina took the initiative to approach Aminat when she was upset as I discuss earlier in Chapter 9 (pp.192-194).

The agendas of the *pedagogicalyk keneshmes* and *usulduk keneshmes* in the four schools provide an understanding of what teachers identify as areas for improvement and how they address them. The meetings appear to be mostly concerned with the pupil attainment across grades, including test results and success in Olympiads. While teachers discuss the learning achievements of pupils, it does not typically go beyond comparing marks across grades. Sometimes teachers are reprimanded for marking their pupils too low and are asked to mark more favourably, especially for pupils in graduating grades. Issues about obstacles to learning or ways to improve teaching are seldom discussed. *Pedagogicalyk keneshme* can be thematic and include presentations related to *vospitanie* (the upbringing) of pupils, or the role of a *class jetekchi* (class tutor) in developing pupils' competencies. However, the presentations are usually long and theoretical and read out, either by deputy principals or the teachers concerned. The content of these presentations is rarely debated. There is no

evidence of deliberate action to effect changes in the school culture, and presentations on *vospitanie* and the role of the *class jetekchi* are rare. More content-oriented and problem-solving discussions occur at the *usulduk keneshme*, perhaps as might be expected, as common issues would be identified by teachers who teach related subjects. These meetings also involve fewer teachers, usually between five and ten, and the smaller number is more conducive to addressing individual professional issues in greater depth. However, the discussions that are more subject-oriented and that share knowledge usually just involve a report that is read out loud.

Thus, participation of teachers at *pedagogicalyk keneshmes* and *usulduk keneshmes* involves presentations and passive listening. In some schools discussions related to pedagogy are dominated by speeches about requirements for reports and the papers that need to be submitted by teachers. For example, in the *pedagogicalyk keneshme* I observed at Manas School, the requirements of official reporting to the 'education authorities' were addressed in detail and are clearly prioritised over pedagogy. The deputy principal at *pedagogicalyk keneshme* of *class jetekchis* (class tutors) spent a lot of time reading the list of reports the *class jetekchis* are required to write and going over what should be included in each document. These discussions are pseudo professional, in that they encourage a preoccupation with bureaucratic, less-substantial, less-important issues. They are also hugely time consuming. This practice illustrates the *deprofessionalisation* of teaching (Evans, 2008; Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) that I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.33-36), which negatively influences the working paradigm of school leaders, demotivates teachers, and sends a wrong message to new teachers. Consequently, discussions to identify and address areas of improvement around pedagogy give way to discussions about bureaucratic matters, which are becoming routine and reflecting a poor level of professional interaction between teachers.

### A shared goal

The importance of establishing a shared goal was raised during the teachers' focus group discussions in Semetey, Kanykey and Manas Schools. Participants,

who included the EEE Teachers, were asked about collaborating with each other on matters of pedagogy. All teachers agreed that their main purpose was improving pupil learning and they recognised the need for a common approach to accomplish this. For example, teachers in Kanykey School, where Larisa and Oleg teach, thought that all teachers in their school should adopt pupil-centred teaching.

*If teachers in school agreed that all teachers should have a pupil-centred approach, we would all use a pupil-centred teaching methodology.*

(Teachers, Kanykey School)

This demonstrates that teachers are able to identify areas for improvement, pointing to what is at the core of a PLC – the shared goal of ‘enhancing pupil learning’; this is emphasised by Bolam *et al.* (2005) and Stoll *et al.* (2006), and discussed in Chapter 4 (p.60). It involves what Wenger (1988) calls the *domain* in a community of practice (see Chapter 4, p.59).

Oleg’s joint initiative with an external organisation in Kanykey School confirms my understanding that teachers need to do more than simply identify ‘a shared goal’ or areas of improvement related to pupils’ learning and upbringing. Oleg’s initiative was to involve pupils and parents to establish a co-governance model in Kanykey School. It suggests that a shared goal should involve a commitment both to pupil-centred teaching and the active involvement of pupils in school management. Oleg engaged the *Youth Human Rights Group*, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in a project to teach human rights education to his pupils. Oleg and the NGO representatives initiated the establishment of a school council, which consisted of pupils, teachers and parents. The idea was to introduce a co-governance model alongside the existing school governance structure, which comprised school leaders, teachers and parents. The purpose of the council was to raise pupils’ issues, not only issues brought by parents and teachers, within the PLC. The school council would also address other issues such as: violations of the rights of pupils, the working conditions of teachers and influencing the decisions of school leaders. The idea of the school council was

in line with the school plan on extracurricular and upbringing activities to teach pupils to human rights.

Oleg presented the idea, school leaders agreed and even suggested to pay him for his extra work. All members of school council, including parents and pupils attended the human rights course for a year. Oleg and the NGO representatives conducted 1-2 day professional development courses during school holidays to clarify the notion of children’s rights for teachers and parents, who wanted clarity on the distinction between children’s rights and children’s responsibilities. Each teacher was given a teacher’s handbook on human rights and children’s rights. The more interested and more active pupils in upper secondary grades were trained in parallel to work in the school council. Parents were quite busy and found it difficult to attend the organised professional development courses, but extra efforts were made to get them there as they were considered to be an important part of school council. Parents are the schools main sponsors<sup>21</sup>, which makes school leaders listen to their opinions and decisions.

One of the results was that pupils who received training were able to share their knowledge about children’s rights with other pupils using clear and practical examples; teachers tended to approach children’s rights more theoretically. Oleg established a point of connection with pupils and he encouraged them to advocate for their rights in school as full members of the PLC, mirroring Little and McLaughlin’s (1993) and Day’s (2009) ideas about ‘connecting emotionally’ with pupils that I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.60). Oleg also made the effort to establish a partnership with an NGO to support pupils’ interest and engagement in social issues, illustrating one of the four *domains* of PLCs – *partnerships with communities, parents and other outside structures* (Mitchell & Sackney, 2007) that I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.61-62). Pupils who were actively involved in the school council became socially and politically active

<sup>21</sup> *Sponsors* is a term used by school leaders and teachers for people who contribute to school infrastructure or maintenance, as there is no funding from the state. These are usually parents of pupils.

after they graduated from school. At one point they had an idea to launch an all-school children's rights action day. School leaders did not support this idea because they were concerned about the unpredictability of the event. Ultimately, however, the idea of the school council failed because of the lack of support from teachers and school leaders. Oleg reflects that school leaders would have supported the initiative of pupils if pupils had come up with ideas that had conceived actions school leaders thought to be important, such as school cleaning. This experience suggests that pupils are unlikely to receive sustained support unless they primarily serve the purpose of school leaders. This corroborates Tubelsky's (1995) and Gazman's (1995) arguments about post-Soviet teachers, and principals, who have difficulty abandoning an 'authoritarian teacher consciousness', as I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.37-38).

The interactions in Kanykey School, as seen through the initiative of Oleg, involved a co-governance idea similar to Tubelsky's (1995) idea of 'self-determination', which I discuss in Chapter 3 (p.48). This did not have real support from school leaders, teachers and parents, who clearly were not willing to learn from their pupils and children, or see them as core members of a PLC. The interests of school leaders, in particular, were prioritised over the needs of a 'collective learning' culture (Stoll *et al.*, 2006) in the school. This confirms Stenhouse's (1975) early insight that the initiatives of individuals cannot be effective unless they are supported by the school (see Chapter 4, p.62).

The teachers in Kanykey School reflect behaviour typical of the teachers in the other schools. Teachers understand that their shared goal is to improve pupil learning, but they feel more comfortable in a passive role, simply observing the efforts of any teacher who adopts a more energetic and innovative approach to empowering pupils. Little and McLaughlin (1993) point out that teachers are preoccupied with their own problems and prefer the 'norms of privacy' over working together, as I point out in Chapter 4 (p.62). When I asked Oleg about the support the school council received from other teachers, he was disparaging about his female colleagues, who make up the majority of teachers in Kanykey School. He considers that female teachers are preoccupied with family problems.

*I cannot judge women because I understand what position they are in. They are fed up with routine and teaching the same amount of work in shorter hours. Women in school constantly think about work problems and home problems, and it is extremely challenging. And when a female teacher is asked to work voluntarily, she refuses because she finds it difficult enough to work when she is paid.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg thinks that collaboration is difficult to achieve when teachers form cliques, whose members oppose members of other cliques often over minor issues. This partly explains why teachers fail to come to a consensus around a shared goal in Kanykey School on issues that matter to pupils, or support the idea of a co-governance model. *Divisions between teachers* impact negatively upon their interactions, and distract from their commitment to pupils' teaching and learning.

Larisa, a colleague of Oleg's at Kanykey School, also refers to the lack of leadership from school leaders in explaining why teachers in their school do not share goals. Her statement illustrates the importance of the support of school leaders to foster collaborative work.

*In our large school, no matter how you try, as a teacher, to persuade other teachers, who are all different, the position of the school leaders is the key. And our school leaders need to work more in that direction...to persuade those teachers who are not persuaded by ordinary teachers.*

(Larisa, Kanykey School)

Teachers in the focus groups in Kanykey and Manas Schools also remarked that the goals of teachers and school leaders often differ. These teachers feel disempowered by the way school leaders disapprove when they award pupils low marks.

*There is an inconsistency between the goals of the school administration and the teachers. The administration's goal is to report on school performance based on improved quantitative and qualitative indicators. In [our] school, the administration reproaches teachers who give pupils a '2' ['D'], and blames teachers for their failure to educate these pupils.*

(Teachers, Kanykey School)

Teachers also confirm that collaboration between teachers and the support of school leaders is necessary to build a 'unified commitment' (Stoll *et al.*, 2006) to maximise impact and realise joint goals (Frost *et al.*, 2011; Frost, 2012). In Chapter 4 (pp.60-61), I reference Day's (2009) VITAE study, and Sammons, Gu, Day and Ko's (2011) study in low performing schools in England that point to the importance of school leaders in strengthening the effectiveness of PLCs.

Ambivalence among teachers in approaching their professional responsibilities also has a negative impact on improving pupil learning. Gulnur of Seitek School and Aigul of Manas School complain about the declining quality of education in their schools. Gulnur, who is a primary class teacher in Seitek School, refers to the big differences between primary class teachers and teachers of secondary classes in her school. Her pupils become used to her style of teaching, which requires them to learn and do the homework on time. However, when her pupils enter secondary school they encounter teachers who do not conduct lessons effectively and who are not interested in teaching. Gulnur thinks that differences between teachers confuse pupils and negatively affect their learning. Pupils adjust to the irresponsible behaviour of teachers and behave similarly.

*If lessons are not conducted, or if a teacher does not check homework, a pupil gets used to missing lessons or not doing homework. And vice versa, if a teacher makes an effort and teaches well, pupils follow the pattern and develop their learning skills.*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

Aigul explains that *the lack of professionalism* among teachers in her school is not addressed by school leaders.

*There are teachers who are present in school, but they do not go to their classes to teach. They maintain that they work, but they may not show up for lessons. They come for 5-10 minutes and then leave to do their own business. They are indifferent towards pupils' learning; they care only about their wages. School leaders pay scant attention to such issues.*

(Aigul, Manas School)

Marina, who teaches in the same school as Aigul, noticed a regular pattern of teacher absenteeism in her school. She provides an example of a frequent

occurrence. She was preparing for a lesson when she noticed that pupils in another class were left alone and were noisy. There was no sign of a teacher in a classroom 20 minutes after the start of the lesson. She went to the deputy principal's office and found the missing teacher there drinking tea with the deputy principal and few other teachers. Marina told me frankly that many teachers do not like her for pointing out what they should do; she thinks a shared goal might be helpful.

*If we had one shared goal for all teachers, we would see it perfectly in our pupils. We have different goals here instead of one shared goal. The shared goal must be supported by the school principal. In our case, she does not want to argue with anyone, she just does not want to confront teachers.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Marina recalls the case when her current school principal asked a senior teacher to attend the class of a teacher who did not write lesson plans. The senior teacher refused because she considered it to be the responsibility of school leaders to work with teachers. Marina believes that the school principal tries to set teachers against each other to escape her responsibility of having to work with them. This is diametrically opposed to what school principals should be doing to create conditions for PLCs in their schools, according to Day *et al.* (2011): school principals should deal with problems that distract teachers from collegial action (see Chapter 4, p.61).

The status of EEE Teachers as exemplary teachers creates the expectation that they will lead innovation in their schools. However, EEE Teachers think that school principals should set the tone and address the unprofessional and unethical behaviour of teaching staff. Marina attempted to raise their unprofessional behaviour directly with teachers concerned but she was instantly accused of betrayal.

Unethical behaviour and a lack of professionalism among teachers, which present obstacles to developing professional identity (see Chapter 7, pp.123-124) and strengthening professional practice (see Chapter 8, pp.175-178), inhibit collective learning and professional collaboration. The lack of professionalism

among their colleagues seriously hinders the initiatives of EEE Teachers and undermines the possibility of establishing a shared goal. EEE Teachers constantly raise these issues but appear to be unable to address them. In some ways this is a human resources issue that merits a straightforward managerial solution. But the lack of professionalism among teachers clearly needs be addressed before PLCs can be effectively established. In both Seitek and Manas Schools unprofessional behaviour by certain teachers is never addressed by school leaders and a lack of accountability becomes a norm, as I show in Chapter 8 (pp.175-178). It is additionally worrisome that this sends the wrong message to pupils, who take their cue from teachers' behaviour.

These examples show how difficult it is for the EEE Teachers to involve other teachers in improving the learning environment in their schools. The prevalent lack of professionalism entrenches a deficit of social capital in schools in Kyrgyzstan, echoing reservations of Munn (1999) and Schuller *et al.* (2000) that social capital can also have negative consequences (see Chapter 4, p.58). This situation suggests a corresponding lack of mutual trust between teachers in the schools and a missed opportunity for 'meaningful collective action' (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

When I asked the EEE Teachers what they thought about their influence on other teachers and the potential for establishing a shared goal in their schools, they were doubtful their initiatives would have an impact on the whole school. Ainura, who is supported personally by her school principal, recalled her initiative to establish an adequate transition process from primary classes to secondary classes; she is doubtful that it will be possible to get the support of all teachers. This confirms earlier findings of Stoll *et al.* (2006) that school principals need to create conditions for collegiality but they cannot guarantee that it will be achieved (see Chapter 4, pp.60-61). Ainura found little support for her initiative.

*I do not think I have enough strength to improve things in our school alone. Sometimes, I give my recommendations to the deputy principals to change things in school. But there are people who cannot change the*

*old ways of working, they are stuck. There are a lot of opponents. Therefore, I do not think there will be efficiency for a long time.*

(Ainura, Semetey School)

The EEE Teachers believe their innovations and initiatives are likely to remain their individual pursuits, confined only to their classrooms if no interest or commitment from other teachers to a shared goal is forthcoming.

### ***Mutual trust and sharing knowledge***

The quality of the social interactions between teachers, including the EEE Teachers, depends on the level of mutual trust and knowledge sharing in their schools.

In my observation of Klavdiya working with teachers, I noticed that the older and experienced teachers asked for her help. Klavdiya mentioned that the young teachers were not interested in learning from her rich experience, as I point out in Chapter 8 (p.160), but she also believes that there was nothing she could learn from novice colleagues. This suggests that she limits her learning to the circle of teachers she is close to and that she is disconnected from novice teachers. This reflects what Huberman calls 'recalcitrance' (1989), a quality in veteran teachers who show increasing serenity with increasing disengagement, while continuing to demonstrate high quality teaching (see Chapter 2, pp.24-25).

Klavdiya understands her professional authority in the school is incontestable on matters of pedagogy (see Chapter 8, p.160), but she deliberately does not play a role to get the school principal or other teachers to involve novice teachers more actively in the learning process. Instead, she takes it for granted that novice teachers should approach her for advice, and she is judgmental if they do not approach her.

In contrast to Klavdiya, Marina, as I discuss in Chapter 9 (pp.192-194), initiates contact with Aminat, a novice teacher, and shares her knowledge. Klavdiya's haughty attitude towards novice teachers sets the wrong tone and her approach does not help novice teachers, who may well be interested in receiving help from



an exemplary teacher like Klavdiya. Klavdiya reflects on the collaborative learning in her school, which she makes no effort to improve.

*I think we do not have such a practice in our school where teachers try to learn from each other professionally. There are, indeed, no good mutual professional relationships in the school. Each teacher sits in her or his own corner... We do not share our experiences. I could have shared a lot of my knowledge and practice, but there is no real interest in it in our school.*

(Klavdiya, Semetey School)

Other senior EEE Teachers, Marina and Aigul of Manas School, also referred to teachers of their age and experience, when asked about who they turn to for professional advice. Aigul referred to one veteran teacher in her school. Marina replied that she would be very hesitant to ask for professional help from colleagues in her school, and explains why below.

*I learnt to learn new things by myself without anybody's help. I try not to ask other teachers questions about my subject because teachers have this stereotype that the more I ask for help, the more I show my subject illiteracy as a teacher. People do not take it as a simple question and my willingness to learn – they think if I am in school I need to know everything. That is why I never ask anyone in our school questions about my subject so that they do not think that I seem not to know something. I search for my answers in books and rely only on myself.*

(Marina, Manas School)

The fear of being perceived as lacking knowledge on the subject and therefore being 'unprofessional' is particularly acute for Marina within the context of her school. A lack of trust among teachers would explain why EEE Teachers in Manas School are reluctant to share their professional knowledge and concerns. As I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.56), Coleman (1988) and David Hargreaves (2001) found that a lack of trust among teachers meant a failure to share their professional knowledge. Marina seems to trust former colleagues from other schools, to whom she turns for professional advice. Marina emphasises that she would not be afraid of asking questions from teachers in a friendly environment, which is clearly not present in her school, as shown below.

*I do not want to be seen not to know something, even though I fully understand that one cannot be perfect and know everything. It seems to me that I would be judged if I ask questions in my school. If I worked in any other friendly school, I would not be afraid of asking for help or asking questions. But in my school...never! I'd better search for the answer by myself or visit my colleagues in other schools.*

(Marina, Manas School)

This example demonstrates a low level of social interaction in the school around professional issues and the isolation of teachers who do have expertise to offer. Marina was able to transcend this negative environment when she offered help to Aminat, who she encouraged to remain in Manas School. Their interaction confirms the importance of establishing trust noted by Hargreaves and Dawe (1990), which I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.63-64).

*I also feel comfortable asking her for help because in our school rumours spread very quickly but I know I can trust her [Marina]. I can talk to her about anything as well. I always remember her as my exemplary teacher, who I can learn from. Based on her experience I can see what can be achieved in life.*

(Aminat, Manas School)

Similarly to Marina, Larisa at Kanykey School and Gulnur at Seitek School also prefer not to ask their colleagues for professional advice. Larisa had a negative experience in the past when she asked an experienced teacher for her lessons plans so that she might learn from her experience; she received a negative answer. Since then she has not wanted to ask for professional help. However, she shares her own lesson plans with other teachers if they want to view them. Gulnur asserts her independence below.

*I try to achieve everything by myself, but even when I need support, I do not want to ask for it. How can they help me? I should make an effort by myself...*

(Gulnur, Seitek School)

Oleg's example of sharing knowledge with other teachers is also revealing. He used to share materials from the professional development courses he attended in the past by copying and distributing them among teachers in Kanykey School. But when other teachers attended in-service teacher development events, he



noticed that they did not share their materials with him. He subsequently stopped copying materials and sharing them with other teachers in his school.

These examples of social interactions between teachers reflect negative social capital which perpetuates a lack of trust, self-constraint and isolation, and mitigates against collaborative learning. Negative social capital limits positive self-criticism and criticism by others (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007), which are essential for a productive PLC (see Chapter 4, p.62). The EEE Teachers consequently tend to individualise their practice rather than collaborate (Little & McLaughlin, 1993) (see Chapter 4, p.62) with other teachers, which limits their impact on other teachers.

### **Supportive environment and collective self-organisation**

In this section, I discuss the contextual factors in school and in the wider environment that contribute to the EEE Teachers' ability to practice leadership and engage other teachers in collective learning. I also discuss the potential of the EEE Teachers for playing greater role in transforming practice in their schools.

The EEE Teachers emphasised the importance of support from education officials for maintaining social interactions between teachers. Because of their rich experience, some of the EEE Teachers build strong professional relationships with experienced teachers in other schools. These are usually with teachers who teach the same subject, and have attended the same seminars and workshops that are organised by education officials at district or city levels. The lack of time and extra hours of teaching mean that teachers are quite dependent on these meetings, as Oleg explains below.

*Earlier, history teachers were invited by the department of education and we shared our knowledge with each other effectively. Our school leaders provided all support for us to attend such gatherings. Now, such gatherings have stopped and we do not communicate with each other as we used to. As a small circle of five or six teachers, we call each other,*

*but very rarely... may be once a year. Each teacher survives and takes an enormous number of teaching hours and works two shifts, which adversely affects teachers and results in tiredness and lack of time.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

The lack of time and low energy of teachers negatively affects the social interactions between teachers outside of school, contributing to their professional isolation. It suggests that teachers wait to be organised to share their knowledge with each other.

Marina refers to an initiative of Russian language teachers in her district who decided that it is more efficient for teachers to learn from attending each other's lessons than listening to theoretical lectures by a professor from the Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE). Teachers pursued an approach to professional development that created an alternative to traditional teacher training: for one year they attended each other lessons, shared their practical knowledge by teaching in other schools and getting comments from other teachers. It also saved teachers money because they had previously to travel to the KAE, which is located in Bishkek. However, this approach to professional development was not approved of by the district department of education, as illustrated by the story of Marina below.

*It was not false. Teachers indeed learnt from each other. But the district education department did not like the idea. We were told that a professor had to be paid his wage. I, as a teacher, received no knowledge but a certificate from the professor. And when it comes to teaching teachers, they think it is better when a professor does it rather than an ordinary teacher.*

(Marina, Manas School)

Marina's experience demonstrates how teachers' initiatives are constrained by bureaucratic top-down procedures, which are prioritised over real learning. This fits Hoyle's (2008) idea of the *extended-but-constrained* professional, which I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.43). Professional constraints are common in education systems where trust between education stakeholders, teachers and district and national education authorities is absent (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012), as I discuss in Chapter 4 (pp.56-57). Marina's example also shows that teacher-

produced knowledge is important for teachers when they deal with typical knowledge that is imposed from outside. Teachers value the unique knowledge they gain from other teachers and they produce inside learning, ideas that are also reflected in Huberman's 'teacher-centred literature' (1985), and Frost's idea about 'practical knowledge' (2012), which I discuss in Chapter 4 (p.62).

I now discuss teachers' relationships with education officials to understand the extent to which the wider environment impacts on teachers' ability to actively participate in education reforms. Oleg's example below shows how ordinary teachers were discouraged from participating more actively in contributing to the curriculum reform by education authorities. During the introduction of the new curriculum reform and subject curriculum, active history teachers raised the issue of shortened hours with Mrs Sharshkeeva, the Minister of Education at that time, authors of a new subject curriculum and textbook authors. History teachers wanted to discuss the allocation of time to various historical topics in the new subject curriculum. For example the former USSR played a crucial role in WWII, but the new subject curriculum allocated only 2 hours to WWII. The Minister agreed that history teachers would develop an alternative syllabus where they would redistribute hours according to the importance of themes that should be covered by the curriculum from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. It was also agreed that history teachers would propose textbooks teachers could use. The Ministry agreed that teachers would develop their own syllabus during the summer holidays and would then present it to the Ministry. Teachers wrote the syllabus based on their professional judgement and the Ministry accepted it as a document for discussion and further action.

However, after some time Mrs Sharshkeeva resigned and Mrs Boldjurova, the newly appointed Minister, presented a new prescribed curriculum to teachers without any discussion, which she expected them to accept unconditionally. The history teachers went to inquire about the syllabus they had submitted to the Ministry. Ministerial staff told them their syllabus was lost somewhere in the Ministry along with all documents dated between 2002 and 2005. A meeting with a new deputy Minister of Education was arranged. He thanked teachers for

their sense of civic responsibility; however, he also threatened to visit their schools to see if he would find anything criticising the prescribed curriculum. Oleg describes what happened next.

*So, the deputy Minister comes to one of the schools and starts to observe classes. It would be OK if they intimidated individual teachers, but they intimidated schools, where teachers worked. They demonstrated all the power over an ordinary teacher and schools. That is why we [history teachers] became quiet.*

(Oleg, Kanykey School)

Oleg and his colleagues' case shows how teacher innovation in the area of their subject is treated by the government. According to Oleg, those history teachers were among the most knowledgeable and opinionated history teachers in Kyrgyzstan; it was certainly bold to provide an alternative history syllabus to the officially sanctioned one. Novice and younger teachers still look to them for independent professional advice on teaching history. However, the true action was suppressed by the MoES, reflecting the positioning of teachers in the education strategy of Kyrgyzstan for 2012-2020 (GoK, 2012), which does not recognise the social capital of teachers nor their role in education reform (see Chapter 1, pp.15-17). Oleg's story reflects a proud moment of independent professional initiative by teachers in Kyrgyzstan.

A similar case that involved a greater number of teachers was related to an unplanned interview with the former head of an independent teacher trade union, for whom I provide the pseudonym Farida. Farida helps to understand how hostile the MoES, security forces and the official Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Kyrgyzstan (TUESWK) can become when teachers take an independent stand to defend their rights. In 2008, 2000 teachers from all over Kyrgyzstan, excluding a few districts in Jalal Abad province and the capital Bishkek, demanded to be paid retrospectively from 2003 for supplementary work and length of service, based on the decision in their favour in their case against the MoES and the Ministry of Finance. But in order for them to be paid, teachers had to ensure Members of Parliament (MPs) had made provision for payments in the budget. Teachers began to approach MPs individually. Farida,

who is a barrister and volunteered to help, suggested that all teachers should address MPs in a single letter. There was no response to the letter to the MPs.

Teachers demonstrated in front of the Parliament in May and June of 2008 until they were heard by the MP in charge of external affairs, who brought education committee members of the Parliament and the MoES to the table to discuss the issue. Neither the Minister of Education at that time, nor the TUESWK were in support of teachers' demands. On the contrary, the Minister of Education attempted to intimidate school principals, demanding that they call back their teachers. She accused teachers of being absent from work. Teachers were arrested by security forces for intimidation, the local branches of independent trade unions were not registered or recognised, and some teachers were simply fired because of their activism. Despite all of this, teachers were able to prevail and influence the decision of the parliamentary finance committee as well as Ms Ibragimova, the vice Prime-Minister for social affairs.

As a result of their mobilisation, the 2000 teachers were paid after the Parliament approved the budget. Parliament also earmarked the funds to pay all teachers in the country. In 2009 an independent trade union was established by teachers who had learned the benefits of collective action. However, the purpose of this movement was limited to securing retrospective payments. Partly for this reason, the new independent trade union did not take an active part in the 2010 national strike of teachers that resulted in the 2011 wage reform. Ordinary teachers also saw no sense in joining the independent trade union because the Ministry of Education led the process for wage reform and the TUESWK took credit for 'organising and leading teachers'.

The real test for self organisation and independent union rights came at the meeting in 2010 with Mr Sadykov, the newly appointed Minister of Education. At the meeting Mr Sadykov, who had invited Farida and few teacher activists, demanded to know which schools they represented, successfully intimidating them from the outset. The teachers remained silent for the rest of the meeting and Farida was the only person to talk on their behalf. After that incident Farida

became disillusioned about the potential for independent trade unions. She decided to stop her volunteer work for teachers and felt disillusioned and abandoned by the teachers. That was the end of the teachers' independent trade union. Farida still gets regular calls from teachers asking her to help them organise, but she refuses to do so. She understands that their low social status and low wages force teachers to prioritise wage increments over other things that might be considered much more important long term.

The episode of the independent trade union provides an illustration of how teachers are manipulated by education officials to serve their own political interests. It also shows that while teachers are able to stand up for their rights, they lack confidence unless they are led and organised by external forces. On a national scale, initiatives by teachers are not encouraged and are effectively suppressed by education authorities, who should be supporting them. These events reflect earlier findings by Shamatov (2005) and Harris-Van Keuren (2011) that an equal political dialogue is very often impossible, as I discuss in Chapter 3 (pp.40-41). This wider environment is unsupportive of teachers, and explains why they are unlikely to lead innovations and cultivate them deliberately among other teachers. Such an environment, in which the lack of trust between teachers and authorities is typical, may also explain why initiatives by EEE Teachers seldom extend beyond their classrooms.

The TUESWK is supposed to organise teachers and protect their rights; however, in reality it plays a symbolic role and is subordinate to the state and education authorities. Farida questions the automatic deduction of monthly membership fees from teacher salaries, which amount to 1 per cent of all teachers' salaries. Farida considers that teachers are 'legally illiterate and need to know their rights and should not be afraid to question their involuntary contributions to the TUESWK.' She thinks that their lack of knowledge is used by authorities to manipulate them. The teachers in the four schools in this study, including the EEE Teachers, pay their membership fees without questioning where the money goes. The focus group discussions confirm that 1 per cent is automatically deducted from their salaries. Even influential and experienced

teachers like Marina of Manas School and her colleagues referred to their lack of knowledge on how much exactly is deducted from their wages and where their funds go to, as shown below.

*No-one asks about our contributions. We just accept the fact that it [1 per cent] is deducted from our wages.*

(Teachers, Manas School)

This suggests that teachers do not question the Soviet model of teacher trade unions, by which teachers joined trade unions only to secure benefits, as discussed by Sanghera and Ilyasov (2008) in Chapter 3 (p.40-41). In all the focus group discussions teachers expressed little faith in the local teacher trade union, a local branch of the TUESWK. The local branch acts solely as a 'provider of social benefits' and is unable and unwilling to protect teachers. The teachers, however, did not go on to discuss who is able to protect their rights in the focus groups or how they might organise to do it themselves.

*The trade union does not protect teachers' rights. It usually conducts celebrations.*

(Teachers, Seittek School)

Cases where teachers really need to be protected are not addressed by the TUESWK if they involve well-known politicians and their relatives, as shown below.

*One teacher was thrown out of school by a parent and the TUESWK's lawyer did not want even to start the process against the parent once he learnt who she was.*

(Teachers, Kanykey School)

The current attitude to the official state trade union of teachers is also somewhat different because teachers receive fewer and fewer benefits, but they do not question monthly deductions to the TUESWK, and continue to remain submissive to authorities. If teachers decide to protest, the Soviet legacy of control comes into full effect, preventing teacher activism from starting. The school principal, the government officials, and the teachers themselves all know exactly how to behave. In Manas School, a novice teacher describes the power dynamics in Manas School.

*School principals hold on to their seats. These seats are their lives...If teachers decide to go on strike, there will be a call from the district education authority to request the school principal to hold the teachers back. Well...they want us to keep a low profile. We could have organised a march to a local government office to complain that they do not care about teachers but these initiatives are suppressed at the beginning. So, we carry on as usual and only take the school principal's opinion into consideration.*

(A novice teacher, Manas School)

As shown in the examples above, the role of school principals is critical in protecting teachers. However, school principals have two constituencies: 1) the MoES that appoints them; and 2) local government that provides funding for the school from its budget. It takes courage not to follow instructions from the MoES that appoints and dismisses school principals. School principals are also not properly educated in organisational development or human resources. There are no pre-service training programmes for school leaders. All four school principals were appointed by the local branch of the MoES, after they had obtained some experience as deputy principals. In reality school principals have to adopt imposed bureaucratic procedures and impose them on all teachers. There were cases of teacher dismissal in Kanykey, Semetey and Manas Schools during my data collection process. All three cases involved district education officials or government authorities that intervened in the internal affairs of schools and encouraged school principals to fire their teachers, without discussing it thoroughly with all teachers as an organisation. Teachers in those schools still question the legitimacy of the decisions made by their school principals based on orders from above.

In Semetey School, teachers openly discussed the need to have a professional organisation that would protect the rights of teachers. However, reminiscent of Farida's case of the independent teacher trade union, they seem to expect a third party to step forward to protect their rights rather than organising to defend their rights themselves. This underscores the importance of the 'collective agency of teachers' in formulating teacher policy, echoing efforts by Education

International worldwide (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012), as I discuss in Chapter 1 (p.18) and Chapter 3 (p.40).

*We do not have unity among teachers. If someone raises an issue, others keep silent because they are afraid. We need to create a teachers' association to protect teachers.*

(Teachers, Semetey School)

The unsupportive environments in which EEE Teachers and the teachers in the four schools find themselves continue to ignore the role of teachers, discouraging them from collective learning within and between schools, and punishing any stronghold where teachers organise themselves. This narrow understanding of teachers' roles is also reflected in the EDSok for 2012-2020 (GoK, 2012) as I explain in Chapter 1 (pp.15-17).

### Summary

The initiatives taken by EEE Teachers show that they position pupils at the centre of the learning process, and they devise non-conventional solutions to the issues that matter for better learning. The EEE Teachers are able to identify areas for improvement related to the upbringing and education of pupils, as well as broader policy areas such as addressing teacher retention, extending school partnerships, introducing participatory school governance, and transforming in-service teacher development across schools.

There is great potential for EEE Teachers influencing other teachers in relation to extending their innovations, and being more collaborative and engaging with their colleagues. However, it does not conform to the way *non-positional teacher leadership* (Frost, 2010) is practiced in HertsCam, where teachers are given support and encouragement to lead. This *nascent* non-positional teacher leadership of EEE Teachers is evident in their actions, which are spontaneous and not strategically focused on influencing and uniting teachers. Their actions also do not sufficiently involve other teachers so that they might cultivate their innovations and knowledge sharing in schools. The innovations of EEE Teachers remain isolated and only influence a limited number of teachers. What seems to

be missing in EEE Teachers' initiatives is their ability to think and act beyond their classrooms to reach the whole school: what Frost (Frost *et al.*, 2011) calls '... [to] act strategically' in involving other teachers in their initiatives. It could also be explained by the behaviour of other teachers who may not necessarily share the commitment to creating 'a culture of shared responsibility for reform' (*ibid.*), as the wider literature also suggests (see Chapter 4, p.66).

The environment around EEE Teachers is not supportive for them to practice leadership and engage other teachers. School leaders are involved in reporting to education officials and administrative issues. They also lack understanding of organisational development and very often do not address the matters of pedagogy. Colleagues of EEE Teachers also have to overwork to make ends meet due to poor wages and low social status. This is worsened by the lack of trust and growing lack of professionalism among teachers, suggesting that there is little unity among teachers in the four schools. There is also a lack of active parental participation, and constraining policies related to lack of trust towards teachers. These factors together contribute to the lack of collaboration between teachers.

As a result of poor supportive environments around EEE Teachers, EEE Teachers' practice remains individual and they are limited in sharing their experiences with others. Even though formal school meetings remain the main platform for discussions between EEE Teachers and their colleagues on matters of pedagogy, the increasingly bureaucratic school management diverts discussions from more important substantive questions of pedagogy to narrow-minded issues of reporting and other administrative issues. There is also a threat to collective learning in the four schools because of pseudo-shared goals, what Little and McLaughlin (1993) call 'shared delusions' (see Chapter 4, p.62): the preoccupation with discussing pupils' marks and results of Olympiads distracts from more substantial issues.

The idea of social capital is not sufficiently understood by school leaders or education officials, nor is it supported by policy. It is steadily eroded by the

inability of EEE Teachers and their colleagues to contribute to collaborative learning and shared knowledge. The work of the EEE Teachers in significant respects is isolated and individualised, contributing to the lack of growth of learning in the professional community. So, aspects of EEE Teachers' professionalism are less likely to be shared with the future generations of teachers if the context around teachers continues to be unsupportive.

Despite all these constraints, EEE Teachers are still in the best position to lead other teachers in collaborative learning and contribute to the growth of social capital based on their lifetime experience, the high regard in which they are held and their willingness to improve pupils' learning. As a response to a lack of supportive environment for EEE Teachers' leadership and social interactions between teachers, the more active collective *conscious* self-organisation of EEE Teachers with other teachers seems to be the only viable response to the increasing demands and control of education authorities. The way teachers respond will pave the way for the future for their profession and define their role in transforming their own profession.

In the final chapter, I summarise my findings and discuss the implications of my study for teacher policies and the role of EEE Teachers.

## Chapter 10: Conclusions and implications of the study

In the next decade, Kyrgyzstan will lose a crucial resource for reforming education. This resource is its Teachers with a capital 'T' – the EEE Teachers that are the subject of this research. These teachers offer exemplary professional commitment, exemplary professional practice and a nascent non-positional leadership that are, for the moment, still embedded within the teaching force. However, this potential is not utilised and is a rapidly dwindling resource. As EEE Teachers leave the profession each year, their expertise is not being replaced. Education officials and school leaders are missing opportunities to learn from these teachers, for building on their professional experience and for benefiting from their strategies for resilience in the face of adversity. EEE Teachers represent both the legacy of a profession and the potential for its transformation: they offer professional skills and knowledge that should be broadly shared within the teaching cadre and they are a ready resource for on-the-job learning support for new teachers. This chapter thus looks in two directions: it looks back to summarise my findings on the professionalism of EEE Teachers and it looks forward to what would be required to harness their potential for transforming the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan.

In the first half of this chapter, I draw together the key findings from Chapters 7, 8 and 9 in relation to professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions: aspects of professionalism in which the EEE Teachers in the four schools excel and are exemplary. Each of these aspects of professionalism is influenced by a range of contextual factors, including a lack of support from schools leaders, an increasingly bureaucratic approach to school management and increasingly disengaged parents. Other contextual factors, such as support from their own families and social recognition by local community members, provide support for EEE Teachers that enables their professionalism. Contextual factors have important 'push and pull' effects that shape professionalism, as my conceptual approach illustrates (see Figure 5.1 on p.70). Yin's (1994) insight in relation to case studies, as to how the boundaries between

a phenomenon and its context tend to blur (see Chapter 5, pp.73-74), is particularly helpful in understanding this dynamic. I thus draw on the aspects of professionalism and the contextual factors that have helped to shape them in the discussion of my conclusions in this chapter.

In the second half of this chapter I draw on my conclusions to discuss the implications of my study for policy makers, governmental education institutions, donor agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), teachers and teacher organisations, parents and community-based movements. I am mindful of the increasing unpopularity of the teaching profession and the poor retention of quality teachers in the current education system in Kyrgyzstan. I argue the need for determined and urgent policy decisions to enlist the assistance of EEE Teachers to support the development of a high quality teaching cadre through which the attributes of EEE Teachers might be sustained and reproduced.

#### A summary of conclusions

I present a list of my conclusions, which provides the organising structure for my discussion of the main findings that follows.

My conclusions are organised in the following manner. First, I present two overarching findings that pertain to the study in its entirety. These are followed by a main finding related to each of my three research questions on professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions and a set of associated findings to each of these main findings. The summary of findings follows:

#### Overarching findings:

- I) EEE Teachers are highly effective and are deserving of their high esteem; however, history and context have made them 'turn inwards' to preserve their professionalism.
- II) EEE Teachers are a valuable resource for improving the quality of teaching in Kyrgyzstan but one that is rapidly diminishing because it is not supported by policy or school leaders.

#### Findings in relation to the professional commitment of EEE Teachers:

1. *Prizvanie* is indispensable and central in understanding and shaping the commitment of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan.
  - 1.1. In the early stages of their careers, vicarious experiences and early affirmation during pre-service teacher education and induction contribute to EEE Teachers choosing teaching as a career.
  - 1.2. Once their early commitment is decided, a sense of *prizvanie* deepens and starts to provide meaning for their commitment to teaching; it establishes principles and ethics for EEE Teachers, and serves as a foundation for their continuing commitment to teaching.
  - 1.3. Social affirmation and *prizvanie* accumulate to contribute to the resilience and continuing commitment that are needed in times of adversity.

#### Findings in relation to the professional practice of EEE Teachers:

2. EEE Teachers find ways to assert professional autonomy despite the prevailing deprofessionalisation and managerialist approaches to education reform.
  - 2.1. The practice of EEE Teachers involves devising non-conventional solutions to the issues that matter for better learning and positioning pupils at the centre of the learning process.
  - 2.2. EEE Teachers continuously search for ways to improve their practice and accumulate their experiences by building professional knowledge: they continue to improve their practice by learning from other teachers and reflecting on their own practice.
  - 2.3. EEE Teachers recognise the importance of establishing partnerships with parents and desire more support from parents, who they consider to be increasingly disengaged from the education of their children.

#### Findings in relation to the professional interactions of EEE Teachers:

3. EEE Teachers are recognised for their exemplary professional commitment and professional practice by their colleagues; however, their professional interactions and potential for influencing other teachers have become constrained by the contexts within which they work.
  - 3.1. EEE Teachers and their colleagues seldom discuss matters of pedagogy at formally structured school meetings.



- 3.2. The support of school leaders for each of the three aspects of professionalism is rarely provided, which undermines collegiality and building shared goals.
- 3.3. Initiatives taken by EEE Teachers to improve teaching are not supported by education officials.
- 3.4. The nascent leadership of EEE Teachers has not yet realised the potential to influence other teachers and contribute to the transformation of the teaching profession from within.

My findings confirm that EEE Teachers demonstrate the characteristics of Teachers with a capital 'T', who first inspired me to think about research and to whom I refer in my introduction. They are well-regarded by colleagues and respected by pupils and parents for their professionalism. The eight EEE Teachers that are the subject of my research demonstrate variability in the three key aspects of teacher professionalism – professional commitment, professional practice, and professional interactions – in their lived daily experiences. Their professional commitment and professional practice are exemplary; however, their professional interactions and influence on other teachers are constrained, and I describe them as dormant. The purpose of my research is to understand these aspects of professionalism in order to gain insights into how exemplary teachers in Kyrgyzstan might be supported in their work and how they might encourage and influence other teachers. EEE Teachers are an aspiration for policy reform in Kyrgyzstan as they illustrate the potential that currently exists in the teaching cadre, and my findings support insights into how this aspiration may be best achieved.

### **The paradox of professionalism**

My findings also involve a paradox: EEE teachers are generally recognised and respected for being exemplary, yet my findings indicate that, over the course of their professional lives, they appear to enact their professionalism within smaller and smaller spheres of influence; for most it is within their own classrooms, among trusted colleagues, or occasionally through something they share at a formal meeting. My findings suggest that this is not because they have become

tired of teaching or less committed to teaching over their long careers. The narrowing of their professional space is, in fact, part of their attempt to preserve it; it is both a feature of their resilience and a strategy of resistance against the threats they perceive to their professionalism. For this reason, it is crucial to understand the interaction between professionalism and its various aspects, and the contextual influences that shape and drive professionalism. This paradox is reflected in the two overarching findings discussed below and the related main findings, which I consider later.

- I) EEE Teachers are highly effective and are deserving of their high esteem; however history and context have made them look inwards to preserve their professionalism.

EEE Teachers who demonstrate *prizvanie*, self-efficacy and resilience create professional spaces where they can innovate and exercise their own professional judgement beyond the reach of bureaucracy and controls. For example, Klavdiya introduces her own way of teaching Russian to non-native Russian speakers, and Aigul finds her way in teaching geography without textbooks, as discussed in Chapter 8 (pp.144-145). All of the eight respondents fortify themselves in their classrooms, in some way, where they are able to preserve their own professional standards and identity. They do not withdraw because they are simply unwilling to share; their self-constraint originates in their efforts to be professional and true to their professional values.

- II) EEE Teachers are a valuable resource for improving the quality of teaching in Kyrgyzstan but one that is rapidly diminishing because it is not supported by policy or school leaders.

EEE Teachers preserve their high quality professional practice, which is important to share with other teachers. The practice of EEE Teachers has similarities with international practice but represents authentic experiences that are specific to the Kyrgyzstan context. EEE Teachers demonstrate that they are able to transform their teaching and learning practice on their own. EEE Teachers demonstrate exemplary resilience, commitment and professional practice, but their leadership within the school is limited. For example, Marina's and Ainura's initiatives around the transition from primary to secondary school

have limited impact on other teachers in their schools, as discussed in Chapter 9 (pp.194-197). Their interactions with other teachers are limited to discussions within subject areas or with teachers with whom they have worked for many years. Lack of support within the education system and within their schools has caused them to confine their professional practice to a smaller and smaller space. Consequently, their influence in the school and in the education system is limited.

Below I discuss the main findings in relation to the professional commitment, the professional practice and the professional interactions of EEE Teachers in the study.

### **Professional commitment**

The main finding in relation to the professional commitment of EEE Teachers is that *prizvanie* is indispensable and central in understanding and shaping their commitment.

*Prizvanie* (Sukhomlinsky, 1981) is not simply a translation of what Fullan (1993) called moral purpose; it is uniquely located historically and culturally. It is a very specific term to Kyrgyzstan and cannot be explained in the same way as moral purpose.

The continuing commitment of EEE Teachers is explained through the complex interaction of 13 factors (see Figure 7.1, p.142) that influence their initial choice to go into teaching, their early choice to commit to teaching, and their ongoing choices to continue teaching. I find it helpful to cluster and characterise these as early affirmation, *prizvanie* and resilience: aspects of professional commitment that emerge to correspond with early, mid and late career stages. These factors are not necessarily sequential; they are socially constructed in that they are rooted in the personal lives of EEE Teachers and they are fashioned through social interactions throughout their working lives. Thus, early affirmation, *prizvanie* and resilience overlap and create a cumulative effect in which all three are mutually reinforcing to support continuing commitment.

Three associated findings to my main finding about the professional commitment of EEE Teachers follow:

Finding 1.1: In the early stages of their careers, vicarious experiences and early affirmation during pre-service teacher education and induction, contribute to EEE Teachers choosing teaching as a career.

Initial self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) of EEE Teachers were cultivated through examples set by their own exemplary teachers, as I discuss in Chapter 7 (pp.113-116). They were encouraged to become teachers by their parents when the teaching profession still enjoyed a respected social status in Soviet society. During their pre-service teacher education and induction programmes as novice teachers, EEE Teachers received professional guidance and psychological support from experienced teachers. These interactions consolidated their early self-efficacy beliefs and enabled them to feel positive and confident about their first teaching experiences, as discussed in Chapter 7 (pp.116-119). This provided a basis for their commitment to teaching from very early on. These foundational self-efficacy beliefs established a professional identity that was to be reinforced by other factors throughout their careers.

Finding 1.2: Once their early commitment is decided, the sense of *prizvanie* deepens and develops to provide meaning for their commitment to teaching; it establishes principles and ethics for EEE Teachers, and serves as a foundation for their continuing commitment to teaching.

*Prizvanie*, in the professional practice of EEE Teachers, is a legacy of Soviet pedagogy, it is driven by *lubov k detyam* (love for children), the moral responsibility for the future of their pupils. As it is no longer driven by Soviet propaganda in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, it reflects altruism in the professionalism of EEE Teachers in the current context. It is both a consequence of their commitment to teaching and a cause of their ongoing commitment, as illustrated by the stories of Ainura and Marina in Chapter 7 (pp.122-124) and those of Gulnur, Chynara and Klavdiya in Chapter 8 (pp.148-150).

*Prizvanie* helps to explain how EEE Teachers relate to other teachers and pupils and emerges quite strongly when they compare themselves with teachers who they consider to lack professionalism. *Prizvanie* provides an explanation as to why EEE Teachers remained in the profession during the difficult transitional period in the 1990s and 2000, and why they maintain their commitment to educating children despite the adversities they face, as illustrated by the accounts from Oleg and Gulnur in Chapter 7 (pp.122-123).

EEE Teachers bond with their pupils: helping their pupils learn and seeing them succeed leads to professional fulfilment that partly compensates for the low social status and low wages of EEE Teachers. They continue to believe that their efforts are of benefit to their pupils.

Finding 1.3: Social affirmation and *prizvanie* accumulate to contribute to the resilience and continuing commitment that are needed in times of adversity.

The resilience (Luthar *et al.*, 2000) of EEE Teachers is built up through positive social interactions and through the recognition of their work by others. Good social relationships with pupils and colleagues help EEE Teachers share professional and personal issues, enable them to support each other in addressing issues and concerns and enhance resilience. Social recognition of their hard work by parents and community members and ongoing support by family members compensates for their low social status and the lack of recognition of the contribution of EEE Teachers at a national level, as illustrated by the accounts from Ainura, Klavdiya and Marina in Chapter 7 (pp.129-131). Factors associated with resilience also boost their self-efficacy beliefs; the conviction that they make a difference to their pupils is central to the professional identity of EEE Teachers and the way they understand their role.

My findings indicate that professional commitment is socially constructed and reinforced by many interactions, not only those that may be deemed professional. This suggests there should be a significant area of intersection between these aspects of professionalism, and thus between the spheres in my conceptual

approach (see Chapter 5, p.70). However, as the findings in relation to the other two research questions show, the relationship between professional commitment and professional interactions is not fully reciprocal: the professional commitment of EEE Teachers was significantly shaped by professional and other interactions through their careers; yet in the current context, they are not able to influence their colleagues as much as we might expect.

### Professional practice

The main finding in relation to the professional practice of EEE Teachers is that EEE Teachers find ways to assert professional autonomy despite the prevailing deprofessionalisation and managerialist approaches to education reform.

EEE Teachers construct their responses to top-down reforms, which, apart from being top-down, are inefficiently implemented. They demonstrate their pedagogical judgement in developing their own syllabuses to adjust to shorter hours of teaching as a result of lack of methodological support for a newly introduced subject curriculum by the government, as discussed in Chapter 8 (pp.145-146 and pp.183-184). EEE Teachers find ways to survive as professionals, as well as to preserve their personal and professional identities.

EEE Teachers demonstrate the full range of attributes along Hoyle's (2008) professionalism continuum, from restricted to extended professionalism. For instance, Larisa demonstrates the attributes of a restricted professional: she is primarily driven by love for her subject (see Chapter 7, pp.135-136) is exemplary in teaching mathematics and is recognised for this by her colleagues and pupils. These professional attributes were shaped throughout their careers. They reflect also Goodson and Hargreaves' (2009) principles of new professionalism, which structure my findings in Chapter 8, and Evans' (2008) idea of 'enacted' rather than 'demanded' professionalism – a distinction she makes to focus on what teachers actually do (see Chapter 3, pp.38-39). The professional practice of EEE Teachers maps onto well-established principles of new professionalism (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) and criteria of the teaching profession that

teachers demonstrate internationally (MacBeath, 2012; Niyozov, 2011). While this implies universality in these principles and criteria, my findings show that the professional practice of EEE Teachers is historically and culturally tied with ideas in Soviet pedagogy: *bilim beruu* (teaching)<sup>22</sup> and *tarbiya* (upbringing). Both are driven by *lubov k detyam* (love for children), which is an essential element of *prizvanie* (Sukhomlinsky, 1984). Thus, even though the international comparisons are academically interesting, the local terms for these ideas explain how EEE Teachers are understood and why they are exemplary for other teachers; it is the local understanding and terminology that inform my findings in the Kyrgyzstan context.

Three associated findings to my main finding on the professional practice of EEE teachers follow:

Finding 2.1: The practice of EEE Teachers involves devising non-conventional solutions to the issues that matter for better learning and positioning pupils at the centre of the learning process.

EEE Teachers enact their professional practice by thinking through what would be the best option for pupils' learning and by using their professional knowledge and judgement. The idea of *lubov k detyam* (love for children) (Sukhomlinsky, 1984) underpins how EEE Teachers relate to their pupils. EEE Teachers consistently place their pupils at the centre of the learning process: this reflects their holistic approach to educating children that includes *bilim beruu* (teaching) and *tarbiya* (upbringing). It also shows that *tarbiya* is a highly significant component of the professional practice of EEE Teachers. EEE Teachers attempt to convey moral values, and they feel responsible for the future success of their pupils, which they associate with their own professional success (see Chapter 8, p.151).

<sup>22</sup> *Bilim beruu* is Kyrgyz for *obrazovaniye*, which is the Russian word for education; *tarbiya* is Kyrgyz for *vospitanie*, a Russian word that best translated as upbringing.

Finding 2.2: EEE Teachers continuously search for ways to improve their practice and accumulate their experiences by building professional knowledge: they continue to improve their practice by learning from other teachers and reflecting on their own practice.

EEE Teachers produce practice-based materials and other documents based on their practical daily experiences to supplement the theoretically oriented materials that are produced for them, as illustrated by the accounts from Gulnur and Klavdiya in Chapter 8 (pp.154-156). These materials, however, remain in their classrooms or are shared within a small circle of their colleagues.

Finding 2.3: EEE Teachers recognise the importance of establishing partnerships with parents and desire more support from parents, who they consider to be increasingly disengaged from the education of their children.

Pupils face numerous problems that result from increasing poverty and social difficulties, as discussed in Chapter 8 (p.168). EEE Teachers want to work together with parents to address these problems which they consider to be far harder to do without parental support. *Tarbiya*, particularly, is difficult for EEE Teachers without efforts being coordinated with parents. The recognition of EEE Teachers' work by parents in relation to *tarbiya* is an important supporting factor in response to the lack of acknowledgement of teachers' hard work at a national level.

### Professional interactions

The main finding in relation to the professional interactions of EEE Teachers is that EEE Teachers are recognised for their exemplary professional commitment and professional practice by their colleagues. However, their professional interactions and potential for influencing other teachers have become constrained by the contexts within which they work.

The historic and current context for education in Kyrgyzstan has led EEE Teachers to be increasingly constrained in their professional practice: they do

not feel supported by the school or school principal so they enact their professionalism in smaller spaces; they do not want to be seen as lacking knowledge so they do not ask for help, which adversely affects mutual learning among teachers; they do not feel comfortable asking other teachers in the school for professional help because they are afraid of being accused of not knowing anything (see Chapter 9, pp.212-213). However, if they are asked by other teachers for help, they provide it without reservation or reproach. Their willingness to help others but not to ask for help themselves reinforces the lack of knowledge sharing and mutual learning in schools. This is another way in which EEE Teachers have developed professional self-constraint; its consequence is an increasing individualisation of professional practice, which creates further obstacles to collaborative learning and limits the influence and impact of EEE Teachers on other teachers.

While EEE Teachers engage in both formal and informal interactions with their colleagues; formal meetings appear to take place more regularly than informal interactions. As this study shows, discussions among teachers at formal school meetings are often diverted away from pedagogical issues and mutual learning (see Chapter 8, pp.162-164). The influence of EEE Teachers in these formal settings is limited. Their status as Teachers with a capital 'T' affords them some respectability and space to use their professional expertise with less interference, but at the same time it limits their interactions between colleagues to the one-directional transfer of knowledge and experience.

Four associated findings about professional interactions follow:

Finding 3.1: EEE Teachers and their colleagues seldom discuss matters of pedagogy at formal school meetings.

Even though EEE Teachers developed their professional practice by learning from other teachers and reflecting on their own practice, they complain of the lack of discussions devoted to pedagogy in their schools within formal meetings (see Chapter 9, pp.202-203) even though these meetings are specifically designed for addressing pedagogy. The purpose of *usulduk keneshme* (subject

department meetings), *pedagogicalyk keneshme* (all school meetings) and *nasaatchylyk* (mentoring) is to provide platforms for professional discussions and input, especially considering that teachers seldom meet outside of these settings due to lack of time and heavy workloads. However, EEE Teachers consider that these meetings do not adequately address pedagogical issues. They find themselves constrained by the formal nature of these meetings, which tend to be dominated by discussions about the bureaucratic and administrative issues that are prioritised by school leaders and dictated, often literally, by education officials who do not allow time for EEE Teachers or their colleagues to share pedagogical issues.

While EEE Teachers identify areas of improvement that are needed at school level, their influence tends to be limited to individual teachers, who prefer to interact with them outside formal meetings, as illustrated by the stories of Klavdiya and Marina in Chapter 7 (p.138). EEE Teachers also find it difficult to devote time to these interactions, due to their workloads and lack of time (see Chapter 9, pp. 214-215).

Finding 3.2: The support of school leaders for each of the three aspects of professionalism is rarely provided, which undermines collegiality and building shared goals.

EEE Teachers are not able to foster resilience in other teachers because school leaders do not foster resilience at institutional levels in the schools. Sharing professional practice becomes limited to random individual interactions because school leaders do not encourage teachers to learn from each other. EEE Teachers are less able to exercise leadership and influence other teachers because school leaders are preoccupied with bureaucratic reporting, as discussed in Chapter 9 (p.203). So, school leaders do not create conditions that enable EEE Teachers to use their expertise.

The lack of support from school leaders is clearly associated with increased levels of bureaucracy in managing schools, which has led to the prioritising of reporting and paperwork over pedagogy. School leaders do not always exercise

leadership. Many simply do what they are told to do by officials from the Ministry of Education and Science. School leaders pass this tendency on to the teachers. As a result, many significant professional and disciplinary issues are left unaddressed by school leaders, leading to a lack of accountability among certain teachers. This lack of accountability has repercussions on the overall attitude to work in the school and makes it difficult for teachers to establish shared goals.

EEE Teachers question the ability of school leaders to manage quality teaching and learning processes and maintain ethical and professional standards in their schools (see Chapter 8, p.176; Chapter 9, pp.207-210). For example, EEE Teachers consider the behaviour of some of their colleagues to be unethical and lacking in professionalism, and view this as a threat to standards of teaching and ethical norms (see Chapter 8, pp.176-177 and p.184). There are clear differences between the EEE Teachers' and other teachers' approaches to teaching in the four schools in my study. Some teachers miss lessons and abuse pupils verbally and physically, yet are not held to account by school leaders. EEE Teachers point to this as one of the reasons why it is difficult to establish collaborative efforts to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Whatever the reason for such behaviour, it reflects badly on the quality of the PLC in the school and its prospects for improving the quality of education. A lack of accountability establishes unethical and unprofessional behaviour as a norm, and EEE Teachers regard this to be a serious issue that should be addressed decisively at school level.

Finding 3.3: Initiatives taken by EEE Teachers to improve teaching are not supported by education officials.

There is a sustained failure by education officials at central and local levels to harness the experience of teachers or enlist their active participation in reforming teacher policy or improving education quality. EEE Teachers expect education officials to be able to help them in their work. Instead, EEE Teachers are discouraged and restrained at all levels by education officials when they lead

initiatives that involve other teachers, as illustrated by the stories of Oleg and Marina in Chapter 9 (pp.215-217). This has led to a complete breakdown of trust between teachers and education officials. EEE Teachers also complain of the lack of quality in the exchanges within the subject groups that are established for teachers from different schools.

The teaching profession in Soviet Kyrgyzstan was not regulated or controlled by teachers themselves, but teachers were, nonetheless, accorded a high social status. The lack of professional autonomy or self-governance of the Soviet period is thus reinforced by the deprofessionalising effects of top-down managerialist approaches to education reform and teacher policy that were introduced with the education reforms that have been inspired by Western thinking.

Finding 3.4: The nascent leadership of EEE Teachers has not yet realised the potential to influence other teachers and contribute to the transformation of the teaching profession from within.

EEE Teachers demonstrate that they are able to identify areas for improvement. However, their individual efforts are fragmented, spontaneous and non-strategic; their initiatives remain individualised and confined to their own classrooms without impacting significantly on the practice of other teachers, as discussed in Chapter 9 (p.201). EEE Teachers demonstrate the potential for leadership that could improve their profession by positioning themselves as influential and experienced professionals. A more supportive environment, as Sachs (2003), Hoyle and Wallace (2009) and Bangs and Frost (2012) point out, is necessary to enable non-positional leadership and a greater sharing of experiences. In the absence of a more-enabling context, EEE Teachers are forced to rely on their own ingenuity and activism: they are doing what they believe they can do but their efforts have not led to the deeper transformation they seek.

Unsupported by school leaders and discouraged by education officials, EEE Teachers initiate fewer and fewer professional interactions with their colleagues. This has the serious consequence of limiting the potential for professional

collaboration and collective learning among teachers in schools. The professional interactions of EEE Teachers are a particularly important dimension of their professionalism because it enables them to influence other teachers and bring change to their schools. The professional commitment and professional practice of EEE Teachers remain unshared with other teachers because their professional interactions are insufficient. This is a missed *strategic opportunity* for transforming the teaching profession from within. The hope of sharing the experience or values of EEE Teachers fades without a supportive environment in policy or practice and their social capital is not developed.

The three sets of findings in relation to my research questions illustrate that EEE Teachers can only be transformative for the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan when each aspect of professionalism reinforces and is reinforced by the other two. Currently, in Kyrgyzstan, the professional interactions between teachers are inadequate, and EEE Teachers compensate for this by enacting their professional professionalism in a smaller space. In the final section of my thesis I discuss the implications of my findings presented here on the professionalism of EEE Teachers in Kyrgyzstan for education policy makers and other stakeholders who may be committed to improving education in the country.

### **The implications of the study**

Within a decade and a half, education policy makers in Kyrgyzstan will need to make determined and decisive decisions to create an enabling environment for teachers. Teachers are the largest labour force in the country: there are 71,014 teachers in secondary schools alone (NSC, 2014). Kyrgyzstan needs to recruit 23,700 teachers and replace 17,700 teachers (UNESCO, 2014) by 2030 to meet the teaching target<sup>23</sup> within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which were adopted in September 2015. Considering the current working conditions and the low social status of teaching, schools are less likely to see new cohorts

<sup>23</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics> Means of implementation 4c (target 10) for the Education Goal in the SDGs states: "By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states".

of qualified and committed teachers who will become the next generation of EEE Teachers. The implications of my research, which I describe here in the last section of my thesis, underscore the urgency of utilising the current generation of EEE Teachers effectively; EEE Teachers are a rapidly depleting resource that the country will find difficult to replace. The key goals for teacher policy should be to recruit the most promising students as teachers and to utilise the expertise of the current generation of EEE Teachers as a resource for strengthening the teaching profession from within. My findings demonstrate that EEE Teachers show mastery in two aspects of professionalism – commitment and practice; they are constrained in the third – professional interactions – but nonetheless still possess potential for non-positional leadership. With adequate support from the teaching system and within their schools, EEE Teachers would willingly contribute to preparing the next generation of Teachers with a capital 'T'. Thus, EEE Teachers are both an aspirational goal for teacher policy and a means for achieving the transformations in Kyrgyzstan's national education system that concerned education stakeholders seek.

In this section, rather than developing the implications of my study separately for each stakeholder, I draw out implications for combined and coordinated action by concerned stakeholders. Close collaboration between all stakeholders is essential for effective teacher policy and quality education in Kyrgyzstan. I develop three sets of implications based on the findings to my three research findings. In addition, I also develop a fourth set of implications related to future research.

I start with the set of implications drawn from my findings in relation to the continuing commitment of EEE Teachers.

### ***Implications of findings in relation to professional commitment***

The first set of implications draws on my findings in relation to the first research question (see Chapter 10, pp.230-233) about the early influences for establishing *prizvanie* as a core professional value throughout EEE Teachers' professional lives. Of course, a conducive set of early influences cannot simply be



reconstituted by diktat. A high social status and respect of community members are likely to engender a sense of *prizvanie*. My findings confirm that the social status of teachers is indeed low in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan; confirming findings in earlier research (Shamatov, 2005; DeYoung, 2007). The social status of teachers, which I describe in my account of the context of teacher reform (see Chapter 1, pp.9-13), as my findings strongly suggest, resides in practical measures; its remedy requires a systemic approach that involves a range of tangible actions, some of which are readily achievable.

Five actions are necessary for national government and local government to consider, as follows:

First, the government must realise that the social status of teachers is not going to be raised if they only grudgingly increase teachers' wages incrementally. Teachers should receive the average wage that state workers are paid; this is an inescapable necessity. Both national government and local government should take immediate practical steps to ensure that teachers are afforded decent living standards, in particular that housing and basic utilities are in place.

Second, the government should encourage teachers in the public statements it makes; it should acknowledge the valuable contribution made by teachers rather than blame them for everything that is wrong with education.

Third, teachers should be given the support they need to be able to teach, including the materials and equipment they require, and proper guidelines for implementing the new curriculum.

Fourth, novice teachers should be carefully mentored and helped during the first 2 years of teaching; this should not be limited to formal mentoring which is insufficient at the moment, and EEE Teachers should be allocated a special role in relation to this support for younger teachers.

Fifth, it is necessary to completely rethink policy on how teachers are recruited and educated. Entrance requirements for state-supported pre-service teacher

education should not be lower than for other faculties, and pedagogical faculties should not admit those students who were unable to gain access elsewhere. Pre-service teacher education needs to be transformed urgently to adopt a more practice-based approach, so that it prepares students for teaching and starts to shape their professional identity.

Without such preconditions, *prizvanie* will not be nurtured in new teachers in the way that it was for EEE Teachers in the past. All of these actions would contribute to raising the social status of teachers and help them to feel valued by society. This would lead to recreating the conditions for the early influences that shape *prizvanie*. As indicated above, the main responsibility for these measures rests with the government, which needs to demonstrate political will and practical leadership. The burden for regaining the social status of teachers cannot be left for EEE Teachers alone to carry.

I now consider the implications of my findings about the professional practice of EEE Teachers as exemplary practitioners.

#### *Implications of findings in relation to professional practice*

The second set of implications draws on my findings in relation to the professional practice (see Chapter 10, pp.233-235) of EEE Teachers, who, despite numerous obstacles, demonstrate a pupil-centred and authentic approach to pedagogy. These implications will inform efforts by concerned stakeholders to strengthen the quality of education in Kyrgyzstan's schools. I elaborate on two that I believe to be especially significant, as follows.

First, my methodology required teachers in the schools to identify those teachers they considered to be the Teachers with a capital 'T'. This suggests that they not only recognise, but may also aspire to the professional qualities that EEE Teachers demonstrate. The implication here is that not only do EEE Teachers have the potential for transforming the teaching profession from within, but all novice and mid-career teachers that associate themselves with the same qualities may also be the natural partners for education reform in Kyrgyzstan. The Ministry of Education and Science should encourage school leaders to utilise the

potential of all teachers more, but they particularly need to recognise the potential that EEE Teachers have for influencing other teachers. EEE Teachers can play a catalytic role in the process, but it is the potential in younger professionals that must be harnessed for transforming the teaching profession in the longer term. This provides a longer and more hopeful horizon for change.

Second, the professional practice of EEE Teachers represents an authentic, credible and teacher-enacted approach to pedagogy that must be acknowledged by national policy and through interventions by donors and international agencies. My research identifies the effects of borrowed policy ideas on the Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan (EDSoK) and I describe the consequences of these ideas and their compounding effects on the lingering Soviet authoritarian legacy in the daily life of Kyrgyzstan's schools (see Chapter 1, pp.15-18). The way forward for an improved pedagogy that can be developed systemically must begin with recognition of the efforts and ideas that EEE Teachers are struggling to implement in their classrooms and schools. Their professional practice is not completely without fault, for no pedagogy can be perfect, but it represents a better starting point for reform than do methods and materials that are imported from elsewhere. My research findings demonstrate that the professional practice of EEE Teachers is not only consistent with the principles of the new professionalism that Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) identified almost two decades ago, but that it updates and renews these principles in the new contexts in which EEE Teachers must function in contemporary Kyrgyzstan.

Rethinking policy to imagine a role for EEE Teachers, and those who might be aspiring EEE Teachers, in education reform requires a questioning of the hegemony of Western notions within education policy in Kyrgyzstan. The policy borrowings Steiner-Khamsi (2004) identified still fail to deliver the improvements they promise for education quality in Kyrgyzstan a decade on. It is important to stress this not as an assertion of narrow nationalism but in order to embrace a locally enacted professionalism.

Below, I consider the implications of my findings in relation to the professional interactions of EEE Teachers.

### *Implications of findings in relation to professional interactions*

Here I discuss the implications of my findings in relation to (see Chapter 10, pp.235-240) professional interactions of EEE teachers. Currently they do not adequately address pedagogy and are characterised by a lack of support from school leaders. Education officials restrict the ability of school leaders to lead and establish a collaborative learning culture that may reproduce itself in Kyrgyzstan's schools. As EEE Teachers become more professionally isolated and their practice more atomised, the less likely they are to be agents of change in their schools or for the teaching profession as a whole. This situation, despite the strong professional commitment and exemplary professional practice of EEE Teacher, points to systemic failure. This has several far reaching implications.

Five actions could be considered, as follows.

First, the formally sanctioned interactions within the schools (the *usulduk* and *pedagogicalyk keneshmes* and the *nasaatchylyk* arrangements) are not producing the collective learning that improves pedagogy and strengthens the teaching profession. Instead, productive informal interactions and informal collaboration between teachers should be affirmed by teachers and school leaders. This may be counter-intuitive for policy makers, but if bottom-up collaborative initiatives by teachers are unsupported or discouraged, as my study reveals, top-down arrangements are unlikely to have their desired effects.

Second, EEE Teachers and the teachers around them would need to be more deliberate in their exchange of ideas and methods of collaboration to develop individual agency through professional learning communities (PLCs), where EEE Teachers act as critical friends for other teachers in their schools.

Third, the state controlled teacher unions and existing teacher organisations have not demonstrated either the willingness or the ability to lead efforts to build the collaboration around pedagogy that places children's learning at the centre of

their professional activities and interactions. These organisations will either need to be fully transformed or completely replaced if the collective agency of teachers is to be utilised to transform the teaching profession.

Fourth, donors and NGOs working in schools should perhaps focus less on training teachers individually to improve subject knowledge and methodology, and concentrate more on supporting authentic collaboration between teachers.

Fifth, structured forms of collaboration may be necessary for effective collective learning and building the teaching profession, but its success requires a level of trust and appreciation that is grown more spontaneously and organically. Policy needs to provide support and incentives for school leaders to establish PLCs; the successful development of a PLC could be a measure of successful leadership.

The difficulty with these implications is that they turn the Education Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan (EDSoK), and most donor interventions on their head. Teacher organisations, and in many ways teachers themselves, including those in this study, do not appear to be ready for such changes, as the episode of the independent teacher trade union described in Chapter 9 (pp.217-219) illustrates. My third research question involved an exploration of how EEE Teachers influence other teachers; the somewhat surprising answer was 'not as much as expected'. The conclusion I am forced to draw is that the future of the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan depends on dealing with this inconvenient reality.

A conducive policy environment and a supportive management approach are key if this strategic opportunity, which I discuss in this chapter (p.240), is not to be missed. The three aspects of professionalism should be mutually reinforcing if there is to be a strong and capable teaching force. A more supportive environment for teaching in Kyrgyzstan would lead to an increased number of EEE Teachers over time, as illustrated in Figure 10.1 below, where the red area represents the area of intersection between the three professional spheres. The more EEE Teachers there are who demonstrate professional commitment,

practice and interactions in their profession, the more likely that they will be able to lead the transformation of the teaching profession from within.

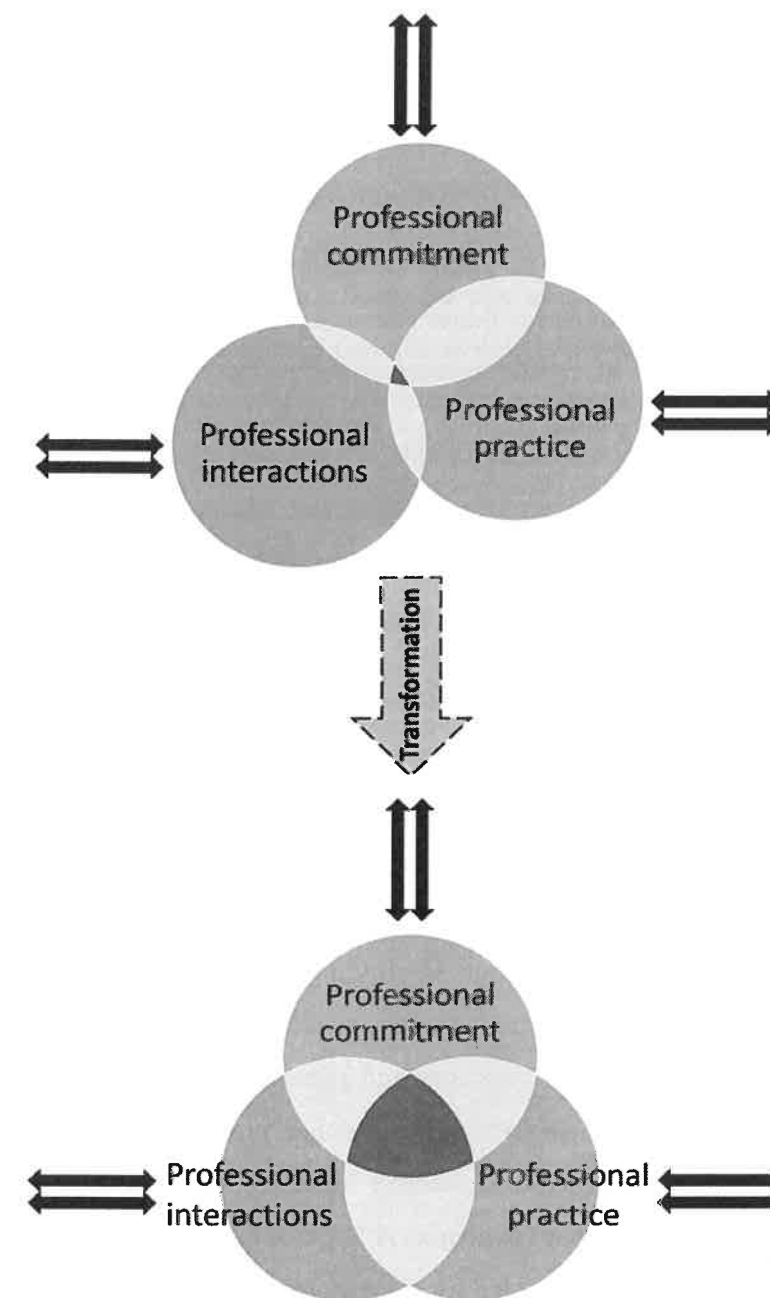


Figure 10.1: A roadmap for transformation led by EEE Teachers

The above three sets of implications coalesce around the three research questions in my study; they reveal the extent to which these aspects of professionalism are shaped by external influences and bound by their internal dynamics. This reflects

Yin's observations (1994) about the way the edges between a phenomenon and its context tend to be blurred in a case study (see Chapter 5, pp.73-74). The idea that these three aspects of professionalism are both interlinked and influenced by contextual factors is central to my conceptual approach, which has implications for further research.

Below, I consider the implications of my findings for future research.

#### *Implications of my findings for future research*

The following implications for future research are drawn from my reflections. Further interrogation of certain aspects of my research in relation to teacher policy formulation, the generalisability of my findings and the crucial role of the context is needed.

First, the three inter-related aspects of professionalism – professional commitment, professional practice and professional interactions – provide insights for formulating teacher policy and for identifying progress in relation to success criteria that may be useful to concerned stakeholders for guiding actions that may strengthen professionalism.

Second, as my study was based on a very small sample - eight respondents in four schools - the generalisability of my findings for teachers in Kyrgyzstan was always going to present a challenge. My findings on the professionalism of eight EEE teachers are not representative in any sense. The discussion of findings in relation to other research in Kyrgyzstan and internationally does, however, allow a substantive general discussion about teacher professionalism and teacher policy. The aim is to provide substantive ideas for teacher policy and school management rather than hard evidence. A larger scale study that would involve a national sample of teachers, led by the donors and the MoES, would be very helpful. This study might establish the challenges teachers face in relation to living standards, working conditions and social status, as well as the areas of support in relation to teaching, and what they regard to be attributes of professionalism that need to be encouraged. My research provides insights and information that would inform the development of the instruments for this study.

Third, whilst each of the three dimensions of professionalism has distinct features and influences of its own, they are crucially inter-related with one another and significantly shaped by the overall context. My conceptual approach places the lived professional lives and practice of the eight teachers within a wider landscape of professional issues that shape and are, in turn, shaped by their context. In this way my conceptual approach suggests a theoretical model that could be filled out and developed through further research. My research shows that their professional interactions are not as interlinked with professional commitment and professional practice as they could be. Further research might explore ways in which professional interactions can be made worthwhile and be better supported. The objective of this research would be to find ways for the professional commitment and professional practice of EEE Teachers to have wider impact. MoES and donors may wish to explore further this opportunity to help teachers.

Thus, while the conceptual model itself may have overall implications for policy and research, each of its dimensions offers specific implications for concerned education stakeholders that I describe above.

At the end of my thesis, I round up my journey as a researcher and the way it has contributed to my development as a researcher.

## Final remarks

In my final remarks, I reflect on how far I have come on my personal journey to becoming a Researcher with a capital 'R' and on my ideas for further research I would like to undertake. Coming back to my own professional path, my teachers at school shaped my early aspiration to become a teacher, and I went on to study and qualify as a teacher. My parents did everything possible to support my education and my professional interests. I shall always be indebted to them for the early affirmation they provided, their complete confidence in me and the way they supported my choices to go and study abroad to do my first master's degree in education at the University of Pennsylvania in the US. I actually never became a teacher but the first two decades of my professional work were devoted to supporting teachers' work and improving the quality of education in Kyrgyzstan's schools. I realise now how the foundations for my moral commitment to teachers' work were laid down in these early years: its mortar is a mix of admiration for their teaching, outrage at their treatment, determination to support change and motivation that derived from my personal efficacy belief.

Bandura (1997) reminds me that I cannot really take credit for any of this myself, that my self-efficacy is located in and is largely a consequence of my social context and the early affirmations I was so fortunate to receive. While my interest in teachers was shaped by my own observation and experience of them, my interest in research – even though it was perhaps awakened by my interest, even puzzlements, when I was in school – was cast during my involvement in the study on teacher shortages (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.*, 2009). This research experience had the effect that a good induction programme should have for novice teachers: I was able to observe how researchers think about what they do, how they gather information and how they treat people. By the time I was interviewing teachers for my own research (Teleshaliyev, 2012), I had come to realise the importance of both listening to teachers and the desperate need for new thinking and new approaches to shape policies that actually work to support teachers and improve education.

I consider my MPhil, which I started in 2011, to represent the beginning of my professional development as a researcher. The programme provided me with the foundational skills I needed. It was, however, the interest in and affirmation of my work by researchers I respect such as Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Duishon Shamatov, Iveta Silova and David Frost, who confirmed my belief that I could achieve the course of actions that lay ahead as I wrote my PhD thesis. The ideas for my research were affirmed by the work of others including Christopher Day, Alan DeYoung, David Frost, Andy Hargreaves, Eric Hoyle, Michael Huberman, Sarfarozi Niyozov, Susan Robertson and Judyth Sachs. To discover echoes in their work for the ideas I cared about was very important: it added to the enthusiasm that came from discovering a community of practice and the involvement in a professional learning community, even one lived more in text than human interactions. The scholarships I received from Open Society Foundations and the Cambridge Commonwealth, European and International Trust made it possible for me to pursue my research objectives. These are among the factors in the 'enabling environment' for my research, and any progress or success I enjoy is substantially due to them.

Writing a PhD takes resilience. My trials over the last 4 years bear little comparison with the determination EEE Teachers have had to demonstrate each day for over two decades, but during my smaller struggles and many late nights I have come to admire them more. Like them, I could not have continued without a love for my subject or my desire to contribute to professional knowledge in my area of research. I have had to rely on my own professional judgment too: building a conceptual framework, committing myself to the notion of EEE Teachers and seeing where it leads to. There was trepidation at the risks involved, but the constant revision of text, the returning to my original ideas and efforts to take them to the next level reminded me that learning requires confidence to take steps into the unknown. This is especially true of the craft of research.

Perhaps, the most rewarding part of this research was establishing trust and relationships with my eight teachers who shared their life-stories and trusted me completely with their hopes and fears. This trust provided the most useful and perhaps the most reliable data. The observed and spoken data from teachers challenged me to faithfully reflect their distinctive decency, truth and simplicity. This guided me in my research and constantly reminded me of the practical purpose of my work: to help these teachers to realise their potential and establish their role in education reform.

I learned a lot more than I expected I would about Teachers with a capital 'T'. I came to recognise that despite their deep vulnerability as professionals and human beings, they still find strength to enjoy teaching children. I do not think that I have discovered sure solutions for improving the social status and working conditions for Teachers with a capital 'T', but my ongoing research interests certainly involve finding ways to facilitate action research by teachers and in developing a research process that involves teachers more fundamentally in building mutual trust and improving their interactions with one another. This will help them to refine their actions both in relation to pedagogy and in relation to the activism that is needed to transform teaching and education in Kyrgyzstan.

There is an irony in my taking this long journey only to end up in the same place as the teachers I have studied, asking myself perhaps the same questions about the future of teaching and the teaching profession in Kyrgyzstan. How do we continue to do our chosen careers well and with integrity? Are current Teachers with a capital 'T' the last generation of Teachers with a capital 'T' who are capable of identifying the areas for transforming their own profession? How can we make sure they are not?

Clearly, the government needs to reconsider its policies to elevate the social status of teachers. However, their approach should be different from the approach that was common in the former USSR, which was based on authority and power. That is not what Teachers with capital 'T' need now. What is needed now is to renew the social status of teachers through collaboration with the

community, based on a shared commitment to quality education and on mutual trust between the profession and ordinary citizens. Above all, the state needs to step forward to support teachers and the teaching profession in material and practical ways. These are all part of the enabling environment that is needed for a new vision for teachers in Kyrgyzstan.

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## Appendices

The list of appendices includes:

- Appendix A: Probing questions for interviews with EEE Teachers
- Appendix B: Probing questions for focus group discussions with teachers
- Appendix C: Observation protocol
- Appendix C: Observation protocol
- Appendix D: Consent form
- Appendix E: Interview protocol with EEE Teacher
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- Appendix G: Research ethics review form
- Appendix H: The data collection and analysis chronology
- Appendix I: Interview protocol with a school principal
- Appendix J: Social passport of Aigul's class

### Appendix A: Probing questions for interviews with EEE Teachers

Each teacher will have three separate interviews (for a schedule see Appendix H). Each interview will last about an hour. Interview protocol (see Appendix E) will be used to guide through the interviews.

Set of questions about commitment and teaching career for the first interview:

In the beginning a teacher may be asked to depict significant life events (both positive and negative) from early career stage to present day and the emotions/state associated with these stages.

1. How did you decide to become a teacher? Was it a call to teach?
2. Can you give me a brief summary or overview of your teaching career?
3. Can you picture your happiest/unhappiest moment in teaching?
4. Do you recall a moment/period when you wanted to leave the teaching profession?
5. What were the influential factors?
6. What/who influenced you to remain as a teacher?
7. What personal, professional and contextual played a role in your career as a teacher? How did you manage to balance all of these?
8. Do you have commitment of family and friends to support your choice of profession?

Set of questions about professional practice and formal interactions with other teachers for the second interview:

1. What is your philosophy of teaching?
2. What do you think is your most important principle and value in teaching?
3. How do you improve your quality of teaching?
4. Who are your pupils to you?
5. How do you learn from your pupils?
6. How do you collaborate with parents of your pupils?
7. Think of one memory when you needed some help professionally. Did you solve it by yourself or did anyone help you?
8. How would you characterise the relationships among and between teachers in your school?
9. Please describe how you collaborate with other teachers.
10. What do you collaborate on with other teachers?

11. What aspects of your practice can you share with your colleagues?
12. What do you think you know or do that others might find useful or interesting?
13. How often do you meet with other teachers and discuss professional issues?
14. Which colleague(s) has/have helped you improve your teaching?
15. What kind of schemes do you practice in schools (e.g. mentoring, coaching, training etc.)?
16. Are you accustomed to being observed and observing other teachers in the classroom?
17. How do those teachers who teach the same subject interact?
18. Do you think you are able to influence things in your school? In what ways?
19. Are you able to choose your own methods of teaching and textbooks? If yes, how do you make decision about using certain learning and teaching materials?
20. What conditions were created to allow your collaboration with other teachers?
21. Is time/space allocated for teachers to work together? Are you expected to work together on instructional issues?

Set of questions about interactions between teachers and non-positional leadership skills for the third interview:

1. How would you describe your role in school?
2. Do you have a specific collaborative project in your school that was initiated by teachers in your school?
3. Do you collaborate with teachers from other schools? If so, how?
4. How often do teachers come to your classes to observe your lessons?
5. How do you address challenges in your work? Do you try to escape them or respond to them? In what ways?
6. Do you think you need a formal position in school to make changes in school?
7. Think of one memory when you influenced teaching or other aspects of schooling in your school?
8. Do you think teachers in your school have different goals?
9. How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run more effectively?
10. Since you have been teaching here, is there anything that you feel particularly proud of?
11. What are your main sources of support? Who do you talk to when you need support?
12. Do the principal and other administrators understand the value of, and support for, teachers?

## Appendix B: Probing questions for focus group discussions with teachers

### Personal professional development:

- Why do you think that professional growth is important?
- How do you develop yourselves professionally?
- How do you improve your teaching?

### Collaboration with other teachers and its nature:

- Why do you think it is important to learn from other teachers?
- How do you collaborate with other teachers?
- Who are the teachers in school who influence you? (without naming them) Why?
- What are the modes of collaboration in your school?

### Areas of collaboration:

- What do you collaborate on with other teachers?
- What aspects of your practice can you share with your colleagues?
- Do you have a specific collaborative project in your school that was initiated by teachers in your school?

### Supporting environment:

- What helps you to stay/survive as a teacher? (addressing separately novice teachers and more experienced teachers)
- What enables you to collaborate with other teachers?
- What prevents you from collaborating with other teachers?

### Questions about effective, experienced teachers and teacher leadership:

- Who are the role models in your school? (Without naming them). Please describe their characteristics.
- Why do you consider them as role models for yourself?
- Can you call these teachers competent, credible or approachable?
- Please write down name(s) of this/these teacher(s) without discussing it with anyone and pass it onto me. Thank you very much.

Appendix C: Observation protocol

Name of school	Location	Observer
Name of a teacher/ Group of teachers	Time	Date

Describe objectively without interpretation:

1. The setting
  - What is the context?
  - What is the setting around?
  - Who is observed?
2. Persons observed
  - What is the relevant characteristic of a teacher observed?
  - How many teachers are observed?
3. Activities observed
  - What kind of teaching/learning/interaction do I see? Do all pupils/teachers participate? What is the mode of teaching (lecture, discussion, group work etc.)?
  - How does the observed teacher interact with other teachers/ school leaders?
  - What is the focus of these interactions?
  - What is the mode of these interactions? (speaking or listening, directions/recommendations/advice)
  - What is the content of conversations?
  - To what extent has the goal has been achieved?
  - How are pupils organised during instruction? (seated in row, work in groups, sitting in a circle)
  - How are teachers seated during their meeting?

Appendix D: Consent form

Research Project

Teachers with a Capital ‘T’: Exploring the professionalism of experienced teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Consent Form

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Research Summary for the above- mentioned study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to be interviewed. I request a copy of the transcribed version of my interview (or a narrative) to provide feedback and ensure accuracy.
4. I agree/do not agree (circle appropriate) to have our interview digitally recorded
5. I am assured that when referred to or cited in the thesis or any publication arising from this research, participants and their locations will only be referred to by pseudonym or in some similar anonymous manner.
6. I agree / do not agree (circle appropriate) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Signature

Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Interview protocol with EEE Teachers

Time	Date	Location
Interviewee	Interviewer	

Introductory part:

1. Introduce myself and explain the goals of the research. Emphasise the importance of the research.
2. Ask her permission to record the interview and explain the consent form.
3. Try to make the situation as relaxed as possible.
4. Preferably meet her in the classroom (where the teacher feels most comfortable).
5. Listen carefully and naturally; demonstrate empathy and interest.
6. Probe the answers that are given and follow up on what is said by the interviewee.
7. Start with open-ended questions:
  - How did you decide to become a teacher?
  - Can you give me a brief summary or overview of your teaching career?
  - What matters for you in the teaching profession?
  - Can you picture your happiest/unhappiest moment in teaching?
  - Tell me what it's like to be a teacher in your school.
  - Ask the teacher to talk about herself (e.g. age, teaching experience, years of working in this school, which subject she teaches).
8. Once the teacher is comfortable and more talkative and a bond has been formed with the interviewer, continue with further exploration.


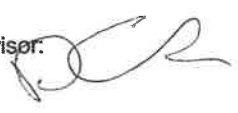
Appendix F: Risk Assessment Form

Faculty of Education



RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: Nurbek Teleshaliyev
Course of study/area of work: PhD
Activity to be undertaken: Fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan: collecting data in four schools; transcribing and analysing data Location: Bishkek, northern Kyrgyzstan
Date of departure:  January,5, 2014  Date of return:  June 20, 2014
If working away, please give details of supervision arrangements for this period: regular communication with Dr. David Frost will be arranged either over skype or email.
Brief details (write no more than is necessary for clarity): Fieldwork will include short-distance travel to four schools in northern Kyrgyzstan within 25-30 km.
List particular hazards associated with the activity: n/a  <i>List only hazards which you could reasonably expect to result in harm to you or others under the conditions in which you are working.</i>  Are the risks adequately controlled? If so, list the existing controls: n/a

<p><i>List the precautions you have already taken against the risks from the hazards you have identified, or make a note where this information may be found. Include reference to staff training, if appropriate.</i></p>	
<p>List the risks which are <b>not</b> adequately controlled and the <b>precautions to be taken</b>.</p>	
<p>N/a</p>	
<p><i>Can the risk be removed? Is there a less risky alternative? Can the risk be reorganised to reduce the hazard? Can protection be provided?</i></p>	
<p>Do any other Risk Assessment relate to this activity? If so please attach a copy</p>	
<p>Emergency measures</p>	
<p>Checklist have you specified</p> <p>✓When the activity will take place</p> <p>✓Who is involved</p> <p>✓What the activity will involve</p> <p>✓The purpose of the activity</p> <p>✓Are there any special risks</p> <p>✓Cross ref to other risk assessments</p> <p>✓Travelling arrangements in place?</p> <p>✓Health issues checked? Equipment requirements checked? Insurance issues check?</p> <p>✓Where the information is kept/available</p> <p>✓All involved informed?</p>	
<p>Form completed by (signature): </p> <p>Name (in capitals): NURBEK TELESHALIYEV</p>	<p>Date: 28/08/13</p>
<p>In the case of students, signed by Supervisor: </p> <p>Name (in capitals): DR.DAVID FROST</p>	<p>Date: 5/9/13</p>
<p>Head of Institution or nominee : Name (in capitals):</p>	<p>Date:</p>

One copy of this form must be retained by the signatory (signatories) and one copy sent to the Secretary of the Faculty for reference

Fieldwork Risk Assessment 2006

## Appendix G: Research ethics review form RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST FOR FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Question:** Who needs to complete this checklist?

**Answer:** Any student or member of staff on the Faculty of Education's payroll who is planning to undertake research involving the collection of information from children, young people, teachers or other adults working in educational organisations, parents and other human subjects. **Note: Do not fill in this form if you are already completing the Cambridge University Psychology Research Ethics form**

### The Faculty's Three Stages of Ethical Clearance

**Stage 1** involves you in completion of this Ethics Review Checklist. This is the first stage of three. It will help you (and others) decide to what extent you need to become involved in the second and third stages. When you have completed it you (and the Faculty) will be in a position to make this judgement.

**Stage 2** will involve you in discussing any ethical dimensions of your research in some depth with another 'knowledgeable person of standing'; this is a very likely outcome of completing the checklist. Further details are provided on page x.

**Stage 3** will involve you in obtaining formal 'ethical clearance' through the Faculty of Education's procedures; some projects will need to proceed to this stage. Further details are provided on page 6.

### Details of the Project

Project Title: Teachers with a Capital 'T': Exploring the professionalism of experienced teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Name of Researcher: Nurbek Teleshaliyev

Position in Faculty: Research Student

Email address: nt323@cam.ac.uk

Usual contact address: Tynystanov 189-a, kv.7. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 720000.

Wolfson College, Barton Road, Cambridge, CB3 9BB.

Phone number: 07551203126

Students Only

Course of study: PhD

Supervisor's name: Dr. David Frost

Supervisor's email: dcf20@cam.ac.uk

Supervisor's contact address: 184 Hills Road, Faculty of education, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, CB2 8PQ, UK.

*All the questions on this checklist deliberately offer you just two answers ('yes' or 'no'). You will probably find that you can answer many of the questions unequivocally one way or the other. However, sometimes you may wish there was an 'it depends' response category. If you find yourself in this position, please give the answer which suggests that, at this preliminary stage, there might be an ethical issue requiring more discussion at Stage 2.*

#### Code of Practice relating to Educational Research

1a) Have you read the *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004) of the British Educational Research Association (BERA)? (if you have not read it, the latest version is available at <http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/2011/08/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf>) **Yes.**

1b) Is this Code relevant to the conduct of your research?

If you have answered 'no', please briefly explain why: **Yes.**

1c) Do you agree to subscribe to the Code in carrying out your own research? **Yes.**

2) Are there any aspects of your proposed research which, in the context of BERA's Code of Practice, might give rise to concern amongst other educational researchers? **No**

If you have answered 'yes', please briefly list possible causes for concern below:

#### Obtaining 'Informed Consent'

3) Are you familiar with the concept of 'informed consent'? (if you are not familiar with this concept you should first consult the following source: page 6 of the BERA guidelines above). **Yes.**

4) Does your research involve securing participation from children, young people or adults where the concept of 'informed consent' might apply? **Yes.**

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 4 above, please answer the following questions.

5a) Do you believe that you are adopting suitable safeguards with respect to obtaining 'informed consent' from participants in your research in line with the Code of Practice? **Yes.**

5b) Will all the information about individuals and institutions be treated on an 'in confidence' basis at all stages of your research including writing up and publication? **Yes.**

5c) Will all the information collected about individuals and institutions be presented in ways which guarantee their anonymity? **Yes.**

#### The Involvement of Adults in the Research

6a) Will your research involve adults? **Yes.**

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 6a above, please answer the following questions; otherwise move to Question 7.

6b) Will these adults be provided with sufficient information *prior* to agreeing to participate in your research to enable them to exercise 'informed consent'? **Yes.**

6c) Will the adults involved in your research be in a position to give 'informed consent' themselves with respect to their participation? **Yes.**

6d) Will these adults be able to opt out of your research in its entirety if they wish to do so by, for example, declining to be interviewed or refusing to answer a questionnaire? **Yes.**

6e) Will these adults be able to opt out of parts of your research by, for example, declining to participate in certain activities or answer particular questions? **Yes.**



## **The Involvement of Children, Young People and other potentially Vulnerable**

### **Persons in the Research**

7a) Will your research involve children, young people or other potentially vulnerable persons (such as those with learning disabilities or your own students). **No.**

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 7a above, please answer the following questions; otherwise move to Question 8.

In educational and social research 'informed consent' regarding access is often given by a 'gatekeeper' on behalf of a wider group of persons (e.g. a head or class teacher with respect to their pupils, a youth worker working with young people, another person in an 'authority' position).

7b) Who will act as the 'gatekeeper(s)' in your research?

Please list their position(s) briefly below and, where this is not self-evident, describe the nature of their relationship with those on whose behalves they are giving 'informed consent'.

7c) Will you be briefing your 'gatekeeper(s)' about the nature of the questions or activities you will be undertaking with the children, young people or other potentially vulnerable persons involved in your research?

7d) If another person (such as a teacher or parent of a child in your study) expressed concerns about any of the questions or activities involved in your research, would your 'gatekeeper(s)' have sufficient information to provide a brief justification for having given 'informed consent'?

7e) If unforeseen problems were to arise during the course of the research, would your 'gatekeeper(s)' be able to contact you at relatively short notice to seek advice, if they needed to do so?

7f) Could your 'gatekeeper(s)' withdraw consent during the research if, for whatever reason, they felt this to be necessary?

7g) Might other people consider that you yourself are the 'gatekeeper' for the research (e.g. projects involving gathering information from your own students or pupils)?

### **Other Ethical Aspects of the Research**

8) Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in public places) **No.**

9) Will the research involve the discussion of topics which some people may deem to be 'sensitive'? (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, certain matters relating to political attitudes or religious beliefs). **No.**

10) Does the research involve any questions or activities which might be considered inappropriate in an educational setting? **No.**

11) Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? **No.**

12) Will blood, tissue or other samples be taken from the bodies of participants? **No.**

13) Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? **No.**

14) Could the research involve psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? **No.**

15) Are there any other aspects of the research which could be interpreted as infringing the norms and expectations of behaviour prevailing in educational settings? **No.**

16) Are there any other aspects of the research which could be to the participants' detriment? **No.**

17) Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing? **No.**

18) Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses or compensation for time) be offered to participants? **No.**

### **What Further Steps to Secure Ethical Clearance are Required?**

Please transfer your responses to all the questions to the grid below by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Question	1a	1b	1c	2
Yes	√	√	√	
No				√

Question	3	4	5a	5b	5c
Yes	√	√	√	√	√
No					

Question	6a	6b	6c	6d	6e
Yes	√	√	√	√	√
No					

Question	7a	7b	7c	7d	7e	7f	7g
Yes							
No							

Question	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Yes											
No	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

### Interpretation of Results

If you have ticked any of the shaded cells above, then you should assume that further discussion involving Stage 2 procedures is required because some aspect of your proposed research is likely to be 'ethically sensitive'. In practice, many issues can be resolved at this stage.

Members of staff should be especially careful about research involving their own students (question 7g). *If you have ticked 'yes' in response to one or more of questions 8 to 18, both Stage 2 and Stage 3 clearance will definitely be required.*

### Stage 2 Clearance

Any 'ethically sensitive' responses identified above should be discussed with a 'knowledgeable person of standing'.

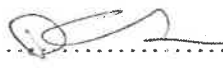
In the case of students within the Faculty, this person will, in almost every case, be the person supervising your research.

Members of Faculty staff will need to exercise some care in selecting such a person. S/he is likely to be someone with considerable experience of research in a cognate area to your own and quite likely to be one of the more senior members of the Faculty. S/he should not be someone who is also involved in the research nor should they be someone with whom you regularly collaborate (whether in relation to research, teaching or administration). The test, in every case, should be whether an outsider would judge the person chosen to be 'independent'.

On completion of the discussion, the 'knowledgeable person of standing' is asked to choose one of the following three responses, to delete the other two and to affirm their views by adding their signature.

**a) I have discussed the ethical dimensions of this research and, as outlined to me, I do not foresee any ethical issues arising which require further clearance.**

Student signature:  Date of discussion: ..28/08/13..

Signature of 'knowledgeable person of standing'   
(Supervisor)

#### Lodging this form

It is your responsibility as the researcher to lodge this form with the appropriate person well in advance of undertaking your research.

Students should provide their supervisors with a copy which can be lodged with other papers their supervisors are keeping about their work. If Stage 3 clearance is required, supervisors will take steps to initiate these procedures.

Members of staff should lodge a completed copy of this form with the Secretary to the Director of Research. They should draw attention, albeit briefly in the first instance, to the nature of the issue(s) arising. The Director of Research will then advise on the appropriate Faculty procedures to be followed to enable the research to be considered for Stage 3 clearance.

Researchers should be aware that Stage 3 discussions could involve them in making modifications to their research design or proposed procedures and may, in certain circumstances, result in ethical clearance being withheld.

**Appendix H: The data collection and analysis chronology**

(Year)	2013			2014					2015			
(Months)	10	11	12	1	2	3-6	7-8	9-12	1	2-5	6-8	9
<b>PREPARATION AND TRIAL STAGE</b>												
Permission from the Ministry of Education and Science to conduct research/ sending official request to selected schools												
Preparing for a trial stage/translation of instruments into Kyrgyz and Russian												
Commenting on instruments/ transcribing trial version/ adjusting instruments after trial/ documenting what has been learnt in a trial												
Visiting four selected schools/meeting with the school principals/ presenting aims and process of the research/ setting up the time for data collection in four schools												
Finalising data collection instruments												
Leading reflective journal												
Signing consent letters with eight individual teachers/teachers in focus groups in four schools												
<b>DATA COLLECTION and DATA RECORDING STAGES</b>												
Interviews with school principals in four schools												
Focus groups with teachers in four schools												

First interviews with eight teachers												
Second interviews with eight teachers												
Third interviews with eight teachers												
Observations of teachers//classrooms/parents' meetings/methodological units/professional development courses/coaching/mentoring/school-wide events/meetings outside of school etc.												
Requesting documents in four schools												
Transcribing/translating data												
Leading reflective journal												
Write up of early chapters of my thesis												
Write up of initial findings on primary data												
<b>DATA ANALYSIS STAGE</b>												
Processing and analysing data												
Leading reflective journal												
<b>THESIS WRITING STAGE</b>												
Draft thesis writing												
Final thesis writing												
Final thesis												
Thesis submission												

Appendix I: Interview protocol with a school principal

Time	Date	Location
Interviewee	Interviewer	

Introductory part:

1. Introduce myself and explain the goals of the research.  
Emphasise the importance of the research.

Ask for permission to record the interview and explain the consent form.

2. Ask for general information about school (number of pupils, teaching staff profile, language of instruction, organisational structure of school etc.)
3. Probe the following questions:
  - Tell me what it's like to be a teacher in your school.
  - How would you describe an average teacher in your school?
  - What are the characteristics of model, exemplary teacher in your school?
  - What are the professional issues that are discussed by teachers in your school?
  - How do teachers collaborate with each other in your school?
  - What forms of collaboration exist in your school? Please name them.
  - What conditions are created in your school for teachers to collaborate with one another and practice innovations?
  - Can you please describe any innovation/change that was initiated in your school by teachers?
  - What else do you think should be done in your school by school administration to make teaching and learning more effective?

In the end of the interview, (1) share the criteria for selecting 5-10 teachers for the focus group discussion and agree about the time of the meeting; (2) show the criteria for selecting two candidates for experienced, effective teachers and ask to write 2-3 names.

Appendix J: Social passport of Aigul's class

Социальный паспорт класса

на 2013 - 2014 учеб. год

Классный руководитель: \_\_\_\_\_

Всего учащихся: \_\_\_\_\_

Актив класса: \_\_\_\_\_

Командир класса: \_\_\_\_\_

Представитель класса в ИДР: \_\_\_\_\_

Ответственный за дежурство: \_\_\_\_\_

Организатор культурных мероприятий: \_\_\_\_\_

Редколлегия: \_\_\_\_\_

Учебный сектор: \_\_\_\_\_

Спортивный сектор: \_\_\_\_\_

Учащиеся, обучающиеся по специальности:

№	Ф.И. учащегося	Дом. адрес и тел.	ФМО родит.	Место работы родителей
1	Алиев, А. А.	_____	_____	_____
2	Алиев, А. А.	_____	_____	_____
3	Алиев, А. А.	_____	_____	_____
4	Алиев, А. А.	_____	_____	_____
5	Алиев, А. А.	_____	_____	_____

Учащиеся, обучающиеся по специальности:

№	Ф.И. учащегося	Дом. адрес и тел.	ФМО родит.	Место работы родителей
1	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____	_____

Учащиеся, обучающиеся по специальности:

№	Ф.И. учащегося	Дом. адрес и тел.	ФМО родит.	Место работы родителей
1	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____	_____